

#### **ATTACHMENT 4.2(c): Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council; Response of the Designated State Unit; and Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations**

The agency's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is established under Kentucky Revised Statutes 163.470 and meets the requirements of 34 CFR 361.29. The SRC is a valued partner with the Office for the Blind (OFB) participating in the administration of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The council meets quarterly to review policies, program information, and other pertinent issues. As a part of the agency's commitment the Office for the Blind provides funding support for the SRC with a FY 2006 budget of \$ 45,400 and a projected FY 2007 budget of \$48,500 to be used to compensate and reimburse the expenses of Council members.

A copy of the 2007 Draft was distributed to the SRC for review on Wednesday, April 12<sup>th</sup>. The SRC was asked to respond to the their review of the document by May 1, 2006. This attachment is Kentucky's State Rehabilitation Council's input to the State Plan, compiled from:

- Written Recommendations from the SRC's annual report (2005)
- Written minutes of the Committee Reports and of the Council that met on November 18, 2005 and February 10, 2006.
- Written input through web site link

On Friday, November 18, 2005 and Friday, February 10, 2006 quarterly meetings of the SRC was held. At this meeting the SRC gave input regarding the formulation of the Goals and Priorities and strategies for the FFY 2007 State Plan. In addition, the SRC made recommendations on the content and method of gaining input regarding the State Plan and the statewide assessment.

The SRC made the following recommendation regarding gaining input to the State Plan.

- Information should be sent through email to students currently receiving services through OFB to get input regarding transition.
- Survey should be posted on the OFB website
- Send survey out through different disability list serves
- Utilize the survey in conjunction with other disability programs
- In the cover letter attached to the survey give consumers the option to call the toll free number and verbally give their input
- Distribute the survey to local advocacy chapters such as Kentucky Council for the Blind and the Kentucky NFB
- Send survey to all AT and Centers for Independent Living to send out to consumers
- OFB staff will be a guest on local Radio Program sponsored by the Kentucky Council for the blind to gain input from the community.

The OFB followed all of the above recommendations for gaining input for the 2007 State Plan.

On February 10, 2006 the SRC voted on and approved the following for questions be used to gain information.

1. The Office for the Blind counseling staff is solely responsible for providing job placement. They work closely with the consumer and we continue to look for new and innovative ways to locate jobs. Do you have any recommendations for increasing job placement opportunities?
2. What do you think we could do to improve skills training at the McDowell Center?
3. Transitioning from high school to post secondary school or work is most important and the Office for the Blind is required to have a plan in place for all individual high school students who are eligible before they graduate. It is difficult to get information out statewide. Do you have any suggestions?
4. What types of information would be beneficial to provide to students and their families in assisting them in making the transition from high school to college and to employment?
5. Do you have any other additional comments or recommendations to improve the services provided to blind and visually impaired Kentuckians?

The SRC made the following recommendations at the November 18, 2005 and February 10, 2006 quarterly meetings stated in the written minutes regarding the 2007 State Plan.

- Develop marketing Plan and consider Public Service Announcements to enhance Community Awareness. Attend and exhibit at events and revise current marketing materials
- Focus on Transition. Assure that parents are informed about area resources in addressing issues surrounding transition, benefits planning and outreach. Develop a mentoring program for transition students collaborating with the Jefferson County Public Schools and Kentucky School for the blind. Highlight transition successes and get these stories out across the State. Development and use of a Transition Student Guide.
- Consider organizing Job Fairs, hosting appreciation luncheons for employers and other collaborative partnerships with agencies to increase employment outcomes in meeting standards and indicators
- Satisfaction Surveys should be mailed quarterly to closure cases and utilize UK in compiling that data in a clear report. Revisions to the survey will occur at the next quarterly meeting on Friday May 12, 2006.
- Involvement in the One-Stop system in assuring accessibility for OFB consumers

- Identify needed changes to the existing program and curriculum at the McDowell Center.

All of the above input was utilized in setting the 2007 State Goals and Priorities and strategies in achieving those set goals. Information regarding needed input was sent through different disability list serves, press releases through the Education Cabinet, and radio at the recommendation of the SRC. Input was gathered through the following methods:

- Satisfaction Surveys,
- A link was posted on the website at for an on-line survey approved by the SRC
- Telephone, email and in writing to the Office for the Blind.

The following is a synopsis of input received from the SRC and other stakeholders statewide for identified service trends and needs:

1. Transition Services should be a priority focus for the OFB
2. Increase the quality and scope of services through the Charles McDowell Center
3. Increase the knowledge and usage of assistive technology
4. Resource Development (funding, training, community)
5. Marketing of OFB
6. Increase the number of employment outcomes
7. Increase staff expertise through training and professional development

The letter submitted by the SRC for 2005 for input regarding the state plan and included in the annual report signed by the chairman of the council is attached. The Office for the Blind appreciates the commitment and effort of the State Rehabilitation Council in providing input and for reviewing the State Plan for FFY 2007. The goals and priorities for the State Plan were developed in collaboration with and approved by the State Rehabilitation Council with input from consumers and interested parties.

The Office for the Blind works with the SRC and makes every effort to seek input for needed improvements and recommendations. This occurs through formal informal communication as well as the committee work of the SRC members. Working in partnership with the SRC the OFB met all its goals for FY 2005 in ensuring that individuals served received the needed services and supports to gain independence through employment and increased skills acquisition.

The Kentucky Office for the Blind did not reject any recommendations from the SRC during the past year. The State Rehabilitation Council and the following sub-committees guide OFB operations: Bylaws, Business Opportunities, Legislative, Nominating, Public Relations and Special Projects. Summaries of the committees' activities and recommendations as well as the OFB response are listed below.

### **Special Projects Committee Recommendations**

This committee worked extensively on Consumers Satisfaction survey issues. The committee recommended that counselors notify each person when their case is closed to update telephone numbers and other pertinent information. This will provide accurate and up to date information for follow up contact when surveys are conducted. The committee recommended that OFB identify age group demographics for all closed cases for review. The committee had some concerns regarding the timeliness in which the contractor conducted the survey. The Committee felt that conducting the survey once a year allowed too much time to lapse between the consumer case closure and the survey yielding unreliable data. The committee established new time frames and requested the contract with the University of Kentucky specify quarterly contacts with the agency to ensure accurate data collection from the closed sample. The committee made the recommendation that OFB provide an orientation for the surveyors so that they were more knowledgeable regarding our consumer base and skilled at obtaining the information needed through the satisfaction survey. The Committee made a recommendation that OFB prepare an Annual Report that captures data to be used as a marketing tool.

**OFB Response:** The Office for the Blind did a review of closed cases by age group and currently contacts consumers at closure assuring that all pertinent information is up to date. OFB staff met with the University of Kentucky and requested that they conduct a quarterly survey of closed classes allowing for more reliable data. An OFB Branch Manager and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor provided a two-hour overview of agency mission, services and the Rehabilitation Act for University of Kentucky staff conducting the surveys. In 2006 OFB staff will work with the SRC in the revision of the satisfaction survey tool. This will assure that questions are relevant and the results of the survey assist the OFB in the identity of service trends and needs. The Office for the Blind took into consideration the Committees recommendation regarding the Annual Report and revamped the style, content and focus of this document. The OFB's annual report for 2005 prepared and approved by the SRC is a color bound report that captures data regarding the success of services. During 2006 OFB will work closely with the SRC in the design and content of the annual report for the upcoming year.

### **Public Relations Committee Recommendations**

The Public Relations Committee of the State Rehabilitation Council was involved in various activities for the year. The council participated in the OFB Annual Awards Banquet that recognizes consumer successes, outstanding staff performance and stellar community partnerships. One member organized a Disability services Training at a local college and an OFB Branch manager participated in that training. During the OFB's Transition Weekend for high school students, SRC member's participated in an employer round table discussion. The SRC is interested in Transition issues and recommended the

agency Transition Coordinator present on the agencies involvement in Transition at one of the quarterly meetings. The committee recommended that OFB staff present at the Kentucky Association of the Education and Rehabilitation for the Visually Impaired.

**OFB Response:** OFB Staff presented at the 2005 Kentucky Association of the Education and Rehabilitation of Visually Impaired. OFB staff participated in the “Families Connecting to Families” National Conference in Louisville that included two-hundred (200) families from all over the world. The OFB Transition Coordinator made a presentation to the SRC and distributed a draft copy of the student transition handbook. The Council reviewed, approved and complimented the OFB staff for their work and the benefits to students and families. In 2006 every effort will be made to maintain exhibits, and publish articles and make presentations for organizations affiliated with student transition in a effort to make the public at large aware of OFB’s transition program. OFB staff is a member of the Kentucky Interagency Transition Council for Persons with Disabilities that meets quarterly to share and discuss transition issues. OFB staff will attend the Kentucky Ahead Conference for Disability Coordinators at State Universities and Colleges in 2006 as well as the 2006 Kentucky Association of Education and Rehabilitation of the Visually Impaired.

### **Legislative Committee**

This committee became quite involved with the concern to close the Kentucky School for the blind and also the School for the Deaf. A resolution was passed that went to the Department for Education from the Council supporting the continuation of the specialized schools. The committee continued to be involved in transportation issues in rural areas and particularly northern Kentucky’s transit system by submitting a letter of support for services for the disabled population. The committee worked on an assessment of the various voting machines being considered for purchase by the state. Three vendors brought machines for the council members to evaluate and make recommendations as to design changes. The Committee stayed abreast of all changes and recommendations from Social Security and how they impacted the Blind and Visually Impaired. There were no specific recommendations from this committee for OFB for response.

### **Nominating Committee**

Recommendations and credentials for new appointments for the SRC were forwarded to the Governor’s office for review and appointment. SRC recognizes the importance of attendance in the role of board participation. An amendment was passed regarding attendance policies for SRC that excessive absences were just cause for an individual to be removed from the committee. There were no specific recommendations from this committee for OFB for response.

## **Business Opportunities Committee Recommendations**

The Business Opportunities Committee of the SRC had a platform of increasing existing employment opportunities for consumers. The committee is our most active and productive. Through committee work we have been involved in the state House Bill 153 pertaining to the state use law that might affect jobs for people that are blind or visually impaired. A resolution was passed and an appropriate letter pertaining to this was sent. Research was done on Lions World Services for the Blind career training opportunities. The committee recommended that the Director of Consumer Services speak to them specifically on the issue of training opportunities for consumers. This would allow the committee an opportunity to learn about consumer informed choice and the individuality of plans. Another recommendation of this committee was a request for email announcements of OFB open positions be sent to the SRC to assist with recruitment of quality staff. The recommendation was made to OFB from the committee to place agency job opportunities on boards, or list serves of the major organizations. The committee regularly discusses job opportunities and are all committed to sharing information with agency staff. Various jobs such as L.C. Industries, American Printing House, and School systems are brought to the table for dialog and members are more than willing to assist with placement.

**OFB Response:** The Director of Consumer Services made a presentation regarding OFB's provision of training and services to consumers. This satisfied the Council members that consumers would not be denied opportunities to attend out of state training programs. The OFB sends on an email announcement as to each job-opening announcement to the SRC on a regular basis.

## **Review and Analysis of Consumer Satisfaction**

The SRC plays an active role in the review of the Office for the Blind's annual consumer satisfaction survey, and analyzes the agency in regards to the extent, scope, and effectiveness of services provided to consumers. A copy of the Executive Summary of the Satisfaction Survey of consumers closed by the Office for the Blind, fiscal year 2005 was distributed to the SRC. A total of 521 consumers whose cases had been closed in the fiscal year 2005 were referred for participation in the study. Of this number 157 (30.1%) participated. Overall the results of the study indicate that consumers expressed high degrees of satisfaction with their experiences with staff, as well as with specific services received and outcomes achieved. For example, overall, 91.5% of consumers indicated that OFB services were excellent (72.7%) or good (18.8%) and 86.5% of consumers felt the quality of OFB services were appropriate and met their needs. Additionally, consumer comments on an open-ended response question were overwhelmingly positive.

## **ATTACHMENT 4.11(b) Comprehensive System for Personnel Development**

### **Data System**

The Kentucky Office for the Blind maintains a system to collect and analyze on an annual basis, data on qualified personnel needs and personnel development. The OFB maintains databases for the purpose of collection and tracking of personnel training and development information. Information is analyzed on an annual basis for the number of personnel employed in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services for the blind and visually impaired. This ensures that the provision of quality services is consistent throughout the Commonwealth. In addition, the number of personnel, category, and qualifications of personnel needed by OFB, and a projection of the numbers of personnel that will be needed in five years are calculated. These calculations are based on projections of the number of individuals to be served. Personnel training files are maintained on staff that contains records of each individual training assessment conducted yearly and utilized in the development and maintenance of their career development plans as well as training, certification and educational activities.

OFB has developed and maintains a system for review of all staff assignments, based on demographic data such as population, geographic area, caseload sizes and labor market analyses. In addition, the office solicits input from field management staff in identifying areas of understaffing, or of specific need. OFB must work within the constraints of a state personnel cap. Currently the personnel cap is set at 105 full-time. The following tables show the number of personnel, categories, vacancies, and projected personnel needs for the Administrative and Program Staff, Business Enterprises and the Charles W. McDowell Center. There are separate tables for the Business Enterprises and McDowell Center Staff as their job duties are different from the vocational services field staff.

### **Administrative and Program Staff= 68**

<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Current Filled Positions</b>	<b>Current Vacancies</b>	<b>Projections of needs in 5 years</b>	<b>Staff / Consumer Ratio 2005</b>
Executive Director	1	0	1	1/2,895
Program Directors	2	0	1	1/1,448
Executive Staff Advisor	1	0	0	1/2,895
Rehabilitation Administrator	4	0	3	1/724
Rehabilitation Assistants	22	1	4	1/131
Rehabilitation Counselors	16.5	1	3	1/103
Independent Living Counselors	7	1	2	1/147
Rehabilitation Coordinator	1	0	1	1/152
Rehabilitation Specialist (Deaf/Blind)	1	0	0	1/26
O & M Specialists/Bioptic	3.5	1	0	1/69
AT Specialists /Bioptic	4	0	1	1/100
Internal Policy Analyst (fiscal)	1	0	0	1/2,895

### **Business Enterprises=11**

Job Title	Current Filled Positions	Current Vacancies	Projections of needs in 5 years	Staff / Consumer Ratio 2005
Director	1	0	0	1/60
Internal Policy Analyst	1	0	1	1/60
Assistant Director	1	0	0	1/60
Administrative Assistant	1	0	0	1/60
Program Administration	3	0	1	1/20
Vending Technicians	3	1	0	1/15

### **McDowell Center Staff= 26.5**

Job Title	Current Filled Positions	Current Vacancies	Projections of needs in 5 years	Staff / Consumer Ratio 2005
Rehabilitation Administrator	1	0	0	1/160
Rehabilitation Assistants	5	0	2	1/32
Rehabilitation Supervisor	2	0	0	1/80
Rehabilitation Aide	2	0	0	1/80
Rehabilitation Coordinator (Visual Aids Store "See World" Total Customers 2005)	1	0	1	1/2,360
Orientation and Mobility Specialist	2	0	0	1/30
AT Specialist	3	0	2	1/53
Vocational Evaluator	2	0	0	1/80
Rehabilitation Instructor	6	0	2	1/26
Recreational Therapist	.5 (PT)	0	0	1/160
Maintenance Worker	1	0	0	1/160
Nurse (yearly count)	1	0	0	1/160

The total number of personnel is 104.5. The office anticipates that it will continue to require a minimum of 17.5 counseling positions to meet the needs of eligible consumers with visual impairments. OFB does anticipate the need for an increase in the number of rehabilitation counselors (18) or other personnel positions within the next five years. All open positions will be filled with the most qualified candidates following all established procedures by the as soon as candidates can be located, hired and approved by the Education Cabinet and State Office of Personnel. All attempts will be made to employ individuals certified in their areas of expertise.

### **Institutions of Higher Education**

The University of Kentucky is the only institution in the state that offers a Master's of Rehabilitation Counseling (MRC) program. This is a comprehensive accredited graduate program in rehabilitation counseling. The on line Accelerated Distance Learning Masters program can be completed in sixteen months without on-campus attendance and at in-state tuition rates. . Participants in the program are eligible to test for rehabilitation counselor certification after completing 75% of their course work in their final semester. A compressed video site is located at the Charles W. McDowell Center in Louisville to allow direct access to rehabilitation courses for a large number of individuals throughout



the state. Arrangements are made for other video site location and video cams were installed to allow for interactive class work. This provides the opportunity for staff to fulfill their Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) requirements and move up in the Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist series. When individuals enroll in other masters level programs out of state those programs are evaluated to ensure that they meet the eligibility criteria for the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor examination prior to being approved for tuition assistance.

The OFB obtains information from The University of Kentucky annually regarding the number of students enrolled and the number graduating from the program with certification or licensure and /or with credentials to qualify for certification or licensure. The following information was obtained regarding the number of students enrolled in the MRC through the University of Kentucky.

University	Calendar Year	Total Graduates	OFB Staff
UK	2005	70	10

The University of Louisville offers a Master's Level Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Program with a Master of Education (non-teaching) degree leading to ACVREP certification in O&M. Courses are taught by professors with numerous years of experience and expertise in the field of orientation and mobility. All aspects of the course work are offered via live video streaming and the Internet, with the exception of summer courses, which are delivered face-to-face. Students progress through coursework that addresses content-specific areas, assessment, identification, skills training, instruction, planning, collaboration, instructional technology, and related services. The program recognizes and capitalizes on best practices and on-site activities as the field-based component of the program. The OFB had one (1) individual complete their Masters in Orientation and Mobility through U of L this year and obtained certification.

#### **Recruitment And Retention Of Qualified Personnel Including Staff From Minority Backgrounds And Individuals With Disabilities**

The Kentucky Office For The Blind shall aggressively recruit, equip, train and work to retain qualified professionals through coordination with institutions of higher education, professional and paraprofessional associations including personnel from minority backgrounds and individuals with disabilities. The OFB recognizes our staff as our greatest resource and is committed to the provision of training state personnel in assuring the provision of quality services to individuals resulting in positive employment outcomes. The OFB will remain current on rehabilitation trends and best practices in the field for the purpose of developing and maintaining its internal training program and securing external training opportunities for its personnel.

The OFB utilizes the state of Kentucky's Personnel web based site in its recruitment efforts. OFB strives to achieve a more diverse workforce by recruiting and hiring individuals from protected classes. Recruitment of individuals with disabilities and those from minority backgrounds enables the agency to have highly competent individuals from all segments of society to accomplish its mission. The University of Kentucky's

Graduate Program in Rehabilitation Counseling has partnered with Kentucky State University (a historically black liberal studies public institution) and the two state rehabilitation agencies to create an endorsement curriculum at Kentucky State to recruit students into the field of rehabilitation counseling. Potential applicants are identified through recruitment, posting, and advertising according to the cultural diversity initiative, and the agency's Affirmative Action goals. When applicants are needed, OFB must request applications from Kentucky Department of Personnel registers. OFB works to leverage its successful performance in recruiting individuals who are minorities or with disabilities in the following ways:

- Work closely with consumer groups, attending local chapter meetings, national meetings.
- Give preference to qualified disabled or minority candidates in hiring inclusive of bilingual candidates.
- Encourage existing minority staff to play an active role in policy and program development, service delivery and program monitoring activities.
- Ensure that programs are accessible to minorities.
- Follow EEO guidelines and Affirmative Action Procedures.
- Utilize Division of Consumer Services demographic and population data to determine the number of minorities and individuals with disabilities in regions, and develop strategies to increase recruitment from these regions.
- Encourage minorities and individuals with disabilities to play an active role in the Office for the Blind's State Rehabilitation Council, participate in forums and provide input into policy and procedures.

The OFB acknowledges the difficulty of recruiting and hiring individuals who are Certified Rehabilitation Counselors. There is a shortage in this narrow occupational field of qualified individuals who hold their certification and competitive salary expectations of graduates usually exceed salary constraints of the OFB. Additionally, a key factor in the State of Kentucky is service delivery in the rural areas throughout the state and the cultural differences encountered. Another key effecting factor of OFB's recruitment and retention plan is the states retirement incentive plan for employees in the Kentucky Employee Retirement system that retire before January 2009. This will have a major impact on the state workforce. The Kentucky Personnel Cabinet prepared a preliminary study and estimates 35% of the state workforce will retire within this 'window'. This implicates the importance of succession planning in an effort to capture the many years of expertise and experience of veteran staff in the OFB.

In 2005 in order for the Kentucky Office for the Blind to raise the level of competitiveness with other states a restructuring of the classification system occurred. New performance expectations were completed (Masters, Masters with Certification, Masters Certification with Limited Managerial Responsibilities) and an upgrade of positions allowing for an increase in salaries for existing staff and higher entry-level wages for new hires based on their education, certification and experience levels.

OFB offers financial incentives to encourage staff retention and promote the achievement of CSPD requirements or become a CRC. The office offers educational tuition assistance, payment of initial certification and maintenance fees, study time allowance per week for staff enrolled in school, alternate hours access to distance learning through state buildings, technology upgrades across the state to allow access to distance learning and training opportunities for maintaining certification requirements through training seminars and professional development conferences.

### **Personnel Standards**

The Office for the Blind is committed to improving the qualifications of its staff and achieving higher standards in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services. The office is committed to achieving 100% qualified rehabilitation counseling staff within 10 years.

OFB has set standards that are consistent with any national or state approved or recognized certification, licensing or registration requirements. In the absence of these requirements, other comparable requirements (including state personnel requirements) that apply to the profession or discipline will be considered. Those certifications currently utilized are in the disciplines of Rehabilitation Counseling (CRC), Vocational Evaluation and Work Adjustment (CVE), Rehabilitation Teaching (ACVREP), Orientation and Mobility (COMS), Assistive Technology (ATP), Recreational Therapy (CTRS), Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialist (CDRS) and other certifications from the National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB). The agency shall pay initial certification and maintenance fees for employees, and will provide opportunities for continuing education courses, in areas required for employees to maintain appropriate professional certification. OFB will take steps to re-train and hire personnel to ensure that such personnel meet appropriate professional standards in the state. Immediately following the passage of the 1992 Rehabilitation Act Amendments the state agency informally implemented hiring policies that provide a preference to individuals with a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, or individuals who are eligible to hold a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) Status. This procedure was formalized with the enactment of the federal standards for the Comprehensive System for Personnel Development in 1997.

Currently the OFB has 16.5 rehabilitation counselors (one vacancy that OFB is seeking to fill). Forty-eight (48%) percent of OFB's existing counselors (8) hold their Master Rehabilitation Counseling and their CRC certification meeting the state CSPD requirement. Of the remaining 8 full-time and one part-time (16.5 with one vacancy) counselors, three (3) are enrolled in the University of Kentucky's Rehabilitation distance learning or accelerated graduate program and two (2) of the three (3) have completed 75% of the coursework, five full time and one part time (5.5) counselors are now eligible for certification and are preparing for the test, one (1) newly hired has committed to enroll in the MRC program. One (1) counselor is planning to retire within the next five (5) year and is not interested in returning to a formal educational setting.

Job Title	MRC		Bachelors	
	CRC	Non CRC	CRC	Non CRC
Counselor (16.5) *	8	5.5*	0	3
Field Administrator (3)	2	0	1	0

\*One vacancy that OFB is seeking to fill

\*5.5 are preparing to sit for the exam over the next two years with the potential to increase our CSPD rate of 48% to 73% given there is 0% turnover in those given positions by 2008.

Within the Office for the Blind, other employees hold a Masters Degrees, Bachelors, or are currently enrolled in a Masters Program or hold other certifications. There is diversity in the type and scope of educational levels and experience of the OFB personnel. The following table shows the different degrees and numbers of personnel for the OFB.

Doctorate	Masters	Bachelors	Associate or Coursework Toward a Degree	Enrolled or Planned Enrollment	Certification O & M, CVE, AT, Bioptic, Engineer, CRC
2	38	16	6	9	25 (17 CRC)

- 100% of Orientation and Mobility Staff hold Certification
- 48% of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors hold CRC
- Deaf Blind Coordinator holds a MRC and CRC
- 75% of O & M and Bioptic Instructors also hold MRC and COM (1 CRC)
- 100% of Vocational Rehabilitation Administrators hold CRC
- One certified CVE on Staff
- One Certified Professional Engineer
- 100% of AT staff have a Masters Degree (2 also hold CRC, 1 RESNA)

## **STRATEGIES FOR ATTAINING AND MAINTAINING THE HIGHEST ENTRY LEVEL STANDARDS; TIME FRAMES**

To ensure that professionals providing services are appropriately and adequately trained and prepared in accordance with standards that are consistent with national certification standards that apply to the profession or discipline in which staff are employed, or standards sufficient to ensure the provision of quality vocational rehabilitation services, the Office for the Blind has established standards and objectives for each personnel classification and makes every attempt to provide activities to attain and maintain these standards. The OFB shall not discriminate on the basis of disability with regard to training and hiring. Based on the Rehabilitation Act Amendment of 1998 recommendations and the professionalism valued by the Office for the Blind, the agency has set the following standards for hiring Professional Vocational Rehabilitation

Specialists and training current Professional Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists. These standards are in agreement with Kentucky's statutes and regulations.

**A. Hiring New Employees. OFB will hire the best possible candidate based on the following priority list:**

- 1) Master's Degree in appropriate discipline (Rehabilitation Counseling, Orientation and Mobility, Education) with national certification from the appropriate Certification Commission.
- 2) Currently enrolled in an accredited Master's Degree program in Rehabilitation Counseling, have successfully completed 40 graduate program hours, and will be eligible to hold CRC certification within two years of hire.
- 3) Master's Degree from an accredited college or University in a related field and will be eligible to hold CRC certification within three years of the date of hire.
- 4) Bachelors Degree in a qualifying acceptable discipline that would allow acceptance into the graduate program and a commitment that they will enroll after their initial probationary period.

Preference in hiring and promotion will be given to those individuals who meet national certification standards and who are from minority backgrounds or individuals with disabilities. There are cases in which the state agency is unable to recruit individuals who meet the national standard. In those instances, the positions will be filled with an individual who has a Bachelor's Degree, and the new employee will receive a job offer statement that says it is the expectation of the agency that the employee will meet the national standard within three years of the date of hire. OFB assists with the provision of training for those individuals who are current employees working toward obtaining a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. OFB offers opportunities for maintaining certification requirements through training seminars and professional development conferences.

**B. Advancement of Current Office for the Blind Employees. OFB should promote acceptable candidates who are current employees when they are the best-qualified applicants for the position. OFB has established a career ladder that is based on the achievement of a Master's Degree with certification as the highest level on the ladder.**

- 1) Current employees with a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation or appropriate area of discipline with certification supplemented by six years of experience in counseling, assessment, employer relations or rehabilitation technology.

- 2) Current employees with a Master's Degree in appropriate area of discipline supplemented by two years of professional experience in rehabilitation counseling, assessment, employer relations or rehabilitation technology. Certification will be required within three years.
- 3) Current employees with a Bachelor's Degree in appropriate area of discipline supplemented by two years experience in a state vocational rehabilitation agency and the completion of a rehabilitation core curriculum met through in-service training or other strategies. Certification appropriate to the job will be required within six years.

Employees will be required to obtain a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation or the appropriate discipline and obtain certification with the highest level of any national or State approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the area in which they are providing vocational rehabilitation services.

The following professional personnel classifications are included in the above standards:

1. **Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor**
2. **Independent Living Counselor**
3. **Rehabilitation Teacher**
4. **Vocational Evaluator**
5. **Assistive Technology Specialist**
6. **Orientation and Mobility Specialist**
7. **Recreation Therapist**

Specific requirements and standards apply to all other personnel classifications. These standards are listed in OFB's Personnel Career Development Policy. These classifications include Engineer, Nurse, Professional Rehabilitation Assistant, Residential Aide and Driver.

#### **Policies And Procedures Relating To The Establishment And Maintenance Of Standards To Ensure That Personnel Are Prepared And Trained**

OFB shall ensure that personnel in all classes of positions are adequately trained and prepared through a system of individual Career Development Plans. Personnel are referred to available on-line approved training programs through Universities and RCEP (Ethics and Informed Choice) offered at no cost. Rehabilitation technology and significant research and information from studies of consumer needs and satisfaction surveys shall be emphasized in individual plans and in training programs. Funding for all training for human resource development activities including tuition, in-service training programs and individual career development plans is supported from the money received for the agency In-Service training grant. The funding per year for the grant is \$19,413 basic funds and \$10,000 in absolute priority funding. OFB has a 10%

match and has consistently exceeded the required match each year to continue to meet the needs of staff training.

## **Staff Development**

The HRD components of training, organizational development and career development form the basis of the Human Resource Development Plan. In order to adequately meet HRD needs of staff, OFB utilizes a variety of training resources and opportunities throughout the Region. HRD resources are available throughout Region IV such as the Regional Rehabilitation Continuing Education Programs (RRCEP) and Rehabilitation Services Administration in the Southeast.

Through a system of Individual Human Resource Development (HRD) OFB has developed procedures and activities to ensure that all employed personnel are appropriately and adequately trained and prepared. This includes standards that are consistent with national or state approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration or other comparable requirements that apply to the area in which such personnel are providing vocational rehabilitation services.

OFB utilizes internal staff and RSA Region IV HRD resources for training. Numerous specialized training seminars and programs are available throughout the state, and throughout RSA's southeast region. Employees participate in training, based on individual needs and career development plans. Employees then are asked to share the information with others as appropriate. OFB continues to provide training on the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 as well as training on the Workforce Investment Act and the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (TWWIIA). Central office and other support staff as well as members of the State Rehabilitation Council will be included in all appropriate HRD activities. The OFB is vested in using technology and is actively identifying potential web-based training programs that will allow staff the opportunity to utilize these alternative training methods for increased professional development. The OFB HRD coordinator has discussed shared resources in this area with Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in accessing online training programs such as Confidentiality and Ethics. Consumers will be involved in professional development conferences as part of the planning process and as participants. Implementation, planning and coordination of HRD training activities are the responsibility of the HRD Unit.

Career development allows employees the opportunity to develop and expand their career goals. Tuition assistance is currently provided for employees in the Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling series, who wish to upgrade their skills and acquire a rehabilitation counseling degree. Vocational Rehabilitation Assistants holding a Bachelors Degree are supported in working toward their Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling. This is key in the promotion of professional development and retention of qualified personnel. Upon hire, individual career plans are developed for employees that will provide opportunities for OFB personnel to upgrade their skills and qualifications and to advance within the agency to higher level paying positions.

The Office for the Blind conducts an annual training needs assessment used to provide appropriate in-service training programs; as well as provide information to update individual career development plans to meet identified needs. Plans are based upon: (1) the findings of the needs assessment; (2) the agency's specific goals and directions, and its continuous improvement initiatives; (3) training updates on the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998; (4) staff input regarding OFB issues; (5) State Rehabilitation Council and consumer input; (6) Federal priorities and (7) the Workforce Investment Act.

The OFB will have a focus on succession planning and work with Georgia State Region IV RRCEP on the development of strategies for succession management planning.

The professional development program (PRA) for Rehabilitation Assistants that was jointly implemented by the Office for the Blind, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and the University of Tennessee's Regional Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program continue to provide training for VR assistants. The OFB has six (6) assistants involved in this program completing Part III in May making them eligible to take the test and obtain their certification. Currently the PRA committee is surveying management, membership and future participants in order to obtain needed information to make recommendations for curriculum upgrades to assure higher skills preparation through this program.

The OFB is supportive of staff in keeping current with up to date best practices and makes sure that staff receive current research and practices. This is done through shared information through workshops, conferences, presentations, publications (Braille Monitor, Council for the Blind, National Federation for the Blind) as well as Internet site resources. In order to disseminate information on rehabilitation best practices, research and the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, the Office for the Blind plans the following trainings:

- a) **Rehabilitation Technology:** OFB will continue to support and provide training relevant to rehabilitation technology. Specifically to provide OFB staff training regarding KATS as an expert in accessibility and disability research. KATS staff provides ongoing information and updates concerning rehabilitation technology and how to access those services in an extensive database.
- b) **Dissemination of Knowledge from Research and Other Sources:** The HRD Unit maintains a library, which contains current information and research in the field of rehabilitation. Any staff member, consumer or individual from another agency or advocacy group may access the library for information. The library contains an extensive collection of videos related to eye diseases and their functional limitations, rehabilitation issues and information on job placement and occupation projections.
- c) **Rehabilitation Act Amendments, Workforce Investment Act Reauthorization and Informed Choice:** With the upcoming reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act and the Workforce Investment Act, the Division of Consumer Services will continue to provide intensive statewide training to all rehabilitation counselors and field staff.



- d) The Biennial Training conference “Lights..Camera..Action...Let’s Go To Work! for all staff and State Rehabilitation Council members was held November 8-10, 2006. Topics included: Workforce Investment, Building partnerships and Collaborations, The Evolving Workforce Market...Improving Placement”, Students...Transition for Tomorrows Jobs, Orientation and Mobility for the Future, Benefits Plus, Unlocking the Keys to Customer Service, Seniors in the Workplace, and Blindness.... A Historical Perspective. The Fall of 2008 is the next Biennial Training Conference.
- e) Orientation for new employees which includes modules on agency structure, cultural diversity, rehabilitation and blindness, informed choice, Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and amendments, consumer services, disability awareness, sensitivity training, eye diseases and terminology, assistive technology and low vision devices, Kentucky Business Enterprises, Deaf Blindness, standards and indicators, Confidentiality and Ethics and the Client Assistance Program will be offered twice (2) a year for new staff.
- f) Medical Aspects (3 week course) has been completed by the vocational rehabilitation counselors and assistants. Negotiation Skills (3 day course) was completed by the Rehabilitation Counseling Staff, Assistive Technology Specialists, Independent Living Counselors and Managers and the McDowell Center staff. Resilience Training (3 day course) occurred for Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living Counselors and McDowell Center staff.
- g) There will be a focus on Job Development and Placement Training and issues surrounding obtaining successful employment outcomes for all rehabilitation counseling staff (Benefits Planning, Psychiatric, Communication Skills, Working with Difficult Consumers and Families, The ADA, Ticket to Work, Transition, Caseload Management, Customized Employment).
- h) All staff is trained in the area of assessment. This will be inclusive of: conducting an assessment in the most integrated setting possible with the individual’s needs and informed choice for the area of Eligibility Requirements. Staff receive training on the process of assessment to ensure the counselor gathers as much information as possible about the individual's work history, education and training, abilities and interests, rehabilitation needs, and possible career goals through existing information or the need for the provision of additional assessment services to gather the needed information. The training will stress the importance of presumptive eligibility as well as information gathered in this assessment phase of the VR process and it’s application to the development of Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The IPE identifies the individual's desired employment outcome, among other things, the steps necessary to achieve the individual employment outcome; the services needed to help the individual achieve the outcome, and evaluation criteria used to determine progress toward the employment outcome. An emphasis is placed on trail work experiences for individuals with significant disabilities.

## **Communication with Diverse Populations**

The HRD team works with the Assistive Technology Unit and the Accessible Textbook Services to ensure that all materials are presented in the most accessible mode of communication that the consumer requires. New Rehabilitation Specialists may attend Mississippi State University's Research and Training Center for training in Low Vision and Blindness Rehabilitation to learn about low vision rehabilitation and assistive technology for individuals who are visually impaired. A selected group of staff attended the University of Tennessee to improve and acquire signing skills and to learn about the deaf culture. All agency counselors are involved in an inter-agency project with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) for Deaf-Blind intervention. All counselors have received extensive training in techniques for working with individuals who are Deaf-Blind. One individual has also been designated to function as the Deaf-Blind specialist for the agency and to work with the OVR in this area. This individual obtained their MRC from University of Kentucky and their CRC in May of 2005. On-going training opportunities ensure that skill levels are maintained or increased.

ASL and Foreign Language Interpreters are contracted as necessary to ensure that individuals who are deaf or who are from diverse cultural backgrounds will be able to communicate in their native languages. Certified interpreters shall provide interpreter services for the deaf. Voice Description is provided for any videos and classroom teaching techniques. All materials utilized and distributed by the OFB are available accessible format, including Large print, cassette tape, CD ROM, disc, Spanish or Braille with respect to the individual's informed choice. All information and publications on the OFB website can be accessed using a "Babel Fish" translation program.

### **Coordination Of Comprehensive System Of Personnel Development Under The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act**

OFB shall coordinate its CSPD plans within the Kentucky Personnel System, to match the standards and qualifications of our personnel with personnel development under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, and the standards under the Rehabilitation Act, as amended.

The Kentucky Interagency Transition Council meets on a quarterly basis to address continued fulfillment of the Kentucky Interagency Agreement on Transition Services for Youth With Disabilities. The Office for the Blind, the Office for Vocational Rehabilitation and the Department of Education are three of the twelve state agencies that are parties to the agreement. One of the provisions of this agreement is cooperative training and staff development concerning transition issues.

OFB also has cooperative professional development programs for high school education teachers, local directors of special education, job coaches and rehabilitation counselors, regarding development and implementation of community based work transition services,

for students with disabilities. These programs will ensure that the personnel development plans are fully comprehensive in nature.

### **The State Rehabilitation Council**

Members of the State Rehabilitation Council participate in planning and implementation of HRD activities, marketing and public relations, satisfaction of services; annual reporting and they are involved in professional development conferences as part of the planning process and as participants. The State Rehabilitation Council had the opportunity to review and comment on the development of the plan and related policies and procedures in April of 2006. The Council has formed the Special Projects committee to work directly with the agency for this purpose.

## **ATTACHMENT 4.12(a): Results of Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities and Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs**

### **(a) Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities**

The Comprehensive Statewide Assessment will be conducted annually over a three-year period and the Attachment 4.12 (a) submitted triennially. In FFY 2006, the OFB developed and conducted a statewide needs assessment in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council and input from consumers and other interested stakeholders. This information was used in formulating the stated Goals and Priorities of Attachment 4.12 (c)(1) of this FFY 2007 State Plan. The assessment was conducted for the purpose of identifying the needs of individuals who are blind or significantly visually impaired in the State of Kentucky specifically for:

- Individuals with the most significant disabilities, including the need for supported employment services;
- Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program
- Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system

### **Methodology**

Information gathered, compiled and summarized in this attachment is inclusive of the following: 1) 2005 Consumer Satisfaction Surveys conducted and summarized by the University of Kentucky for case closures of the OFB, 2) Information regarding needed input was sent statewide through different disability list serves, press releases through the Education Cabinet, and radio broadcast at the recommendation of the SRC; 3) A link was posted on the OFB website for an on-line survey approved by the SRC, 4) Input communicated via telephone, email, tape, computer disc and in writing to the Office for the Blind, 5) The 2002 Prevent Blindness America Report, 6) U.S. Census Reports, 7) The Kentucky Development Disability Network Joint Needs Assessment Survey Results, August 2005, 8) Kentucky School for the Blind Statistical Reports 9) Staff Training Needs Assessment and 9) Input from the SRC through quarterly meetings and the 2005 annual report.

The Office for the Blind utilized different accessible venues to provide consumers, and other interested individuals, with the opportunity to provide feedback, suggestions and information regarding the services and operation of the Office for the Blind that should be addressed in the 2007 State Plan.

The SRC worked with the OFB to develop a user-friendly survey consisting of four questions regarding the quality, scope and expansion of services with a focus on Transition and employment. Individuals could go to the website at <http://blind.ky.gov> and access the link to complete an on-line survey or provide input verbally by calling the OFB 1-800-321-6668. Comments were accepted via email to: [Cora.mcnabb@ky.gov](mailto:Cora.mcnabb@ky.gov), made in writing, cassette tape, Braille and/or computer disk and sent to The Office for the Blind, 209 St. Clair Street, P.O. Box 757 Frankfort, KY 40602-0757.

The Kentucky Office for the Blind recognizes the difficulty in obtaining valid and relevant data regarding individuals who are blind and visually impaired specific to the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The following information is inclusive of current available and valid data on this disability population. The most current U.S. Census Bureau information (2004) questions were formatted to be inclusive of the sensory disabilities of “blindness, deafness or a severe vision or hearing impairment” and do not yield stand-alone data for blindness and vision impairment.

### **(i) Results of Comprehensive Statewide Assessment**

#### **State Rehabilitation Council Input in identifying service trends and needs**

- Written Recommendations from the SRC’s annual report (2005)
- Written minutes of the Committee Reports and of the Council that met on November 18, 2005 and February 10, 2006.
- Written input through web site link

On Friday, November 18, 2005 and Friday, February 10, 2006 quarterly meetings of the SRC was held and the SRC gave input regarding the formulation of the Goals and Priorities and strategies for the FFY 2007 State Plan. The SRC made the following recommendations regarding gaining input to the State Plan. The survey should be sent through email to students currently receiving services through OFB for transition, posted on the OFB website and sent through different disability list serves for statewide distribution in conjunction with other disability programs. Consumers should be given the option to call the toll free number and verbally give their input. Distribute the survey to local advocacy chapters such as Kentucky Council for the Blind and the Kentucky NFB and to all AT and Centers for Independent Living for distribution to consumers. In addition an OFB staff will be a guest on local Radio Program sponsored by the Kentucky Council for the blind to gain input from the community. The OFB followed all of the above recommendations for gaining input for the 2007 State Plan. On February 10, 2006 the SRC voted on and approved the following for questions be used to gain information.

6. The Office for the Blind counseling staff is solely responsible for providing job placement. They work closely with the consumer and we continue to look for new and innovative ways to locate jobs. Do you have any recommendations for increasing job placement opportunities?

7. What do you think we could do to improve skills training at the McDowell Center?
8. Transitioning from high school to post secondary school or work is most important and the Office for the Blind is required to have a plan in place for all individual high school students who are eligible before they graduate. It is difficult to get information out statewide. Do you have any suggestions?
9. What types of information would be beneficial to provide to students and their families in assisting them in making the transition from high school to college and to employment?

Do you have any other additional comments or recommendations to improve the services provided to blind and visually impaired Kentuckians?

The SRC made the following recommendations regarding issues needing addressed at the November 18, 2005 and February 10, 2006 quarterly meetings stated in the written minutes regarding the 2007 State Plan. The SRC felt that OFB needed to develop a marketing plan and give serious consideration to Public Service Announcements to enhance Community Awareness. One of the SRC members gave the contact information for an individual skilled at creating radio advertisements, public service announcements, and voiceovers. SRC encourage OFB staff to attend and exhibit at events and revise current marketing materials. The SRC indicated that OFB was “the best kept secret in the state”.

The SRC shared concerns regarding Transition and the need for a focus in this area. Especially in assuring that parents are informed about area resources in addressing issues surrounding transition, benefits planning and outreach. One critical area of need identified is that parents are not knowledgeable of area resources and a fear of loss of benefits for their son or daughter. The SRC felt that the development of a mentoring program for transition students collaborating with the Jefferson County Public Schools and Kentucky School for the Blind was an excellent idea as well as the development and use of a Transition Student Guide that identifies need resources and information for students and their families. Another recommendation was to highlight transition successes and get these stories out across the State.

For the area of job development the SRC indicated that developing employer relationships is crucial. The SRC recommended utilizing a variety of methods such as Job Fairs, hosting appreciation luncheons for employers and other collaborative partnerships with agencies to increase employment outcomes in meeting the required standards and indicators. There is a need to identify private employers that have employed individuals who are blind and visually impaired and capture the success of those placements and utilize the information gained through that process. OFB should work closely with all community rehabilitation providers across the state in sharing resources and developing supported employment programs that address the needs of the blind and visually impaired.

The SRC expressed dissatisfaction in the method data collection through the satisfaction survey process with the University of Kentucky. The University of Kentucky did not conduct the surveys quarterly throughout the calendar year as requested. This allowed for a smaller sample year-end. Individuals often moved with no forwarding address or their phone was disconnected and in some cases consumers could not remember relevant information. The SRC asked that Satisfaction Surveys be mailed quarterly to closure cases and utilize UK in compiling that data in a clear report. Revisions to the survey will occur at the next quarterly meeting on Friday May 12, 2006.

The CAP representative serving on the SRC keeps the committee abreast of accessibility issues for individuals with visual impairments receiving services through the Work One System. CAP staff shared with the SRC and OFB staff recent accessibility surveys done throughout the state at the One Stop Centers and follow up communication with those centers. This continues to be an identified area of need for individuals with a visual impairment. In some centers equipment purchased through the WIG projects remains in the box or there is not one at the location that knows how to utilize existing equipment.

Input indicated there is a need to upgrade training curriculum at the McDowell Center to include Microsoft, Cisco, Novell, and other training for certification. Funding could be sought from grant sources as well as computer related manufacturers and organizations which aid persons with blindness. There is the need to identify gaps in services for individuals participating in at the McDowell Center. If an individual does not complete the training program or refuses to attend OFB should identify why through consumer focus groups or phone interviews. The SRC made the recommendation to research the possibility of expanding the volunteer program at the McDowell Center to allow for additional expertise and support.

### **Statewide Staff Training Needs Assessment**

A training needs assessment was completed statewide in March of 2006. The results of the survey identified the following training needs of staff directly relating to consumer service needs: 1) Assistive Technology, Job Development, and Dealing with Difficult Families and Consumers. The Executive Staff Liaison as the HRD Coordinator will arrange for the provision of training in the identified areas relating to service needs of consumers. The OFB will continue to conduct a yearly assessment to identify staff's perceived areas of needed training and offer training through a venue of different training methods as well as educational opportunities to assure staff are equipped to serve individuals with visual impairments (Goal 9, Goal 12).

### **U.S. Census Data on the Blind and Visually Impaired**

The US. Census Bureau 2004 American Community Survey reports the population of Kentucky is estimated at 4,031,134. Males make up 48.7% and females 51.3% of the

total population. Race data of the 2004 U.S. Census Bureau indicated that 90.3% of the population is white, 6.8% of the population is Black or African American, 1.9% is Hispanic or Latino race, 0.2% American Indian and Alaska Native, .9% Asian, 0.1% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander and 0.7% some other race. The median age is 37.3 with 3,057,341 of the population or 75.8% over the age of 18 years. The population of 25 years and older with a high school diploma or higher is 77.6% (U.S. 83.9%) and a Bachelor's degree or higher is at 19%. (U.S. 27.0%). The average family size in Kentucky is 2.95 with a median family income of \$43,953 (U.S. \$53,692).

The population of 5 years and older in the U. S. without a disability is reported to be 85.5% and this translates into 227,075,719. The U.S. Census Bureau 2004 American Community Survey reports 6.7% (17,752,710) with one type of disability and 7.6% (20,137,403) with two or more types of disabilities in U.S. The number of individuals in the U.S. population 16 to 64 years with a sensory disability is 2.6% (4,832,658). The number of individuals in Kentucky without any disability is 79.1% and this translates into 2,982,059. The number with one type of disability in Kentucky is 8.5% (318,836) and the number with two or more types of disabilities is 12.5% (468,877). The reported number of individuals in Kentucky with a sensory impairment population 5 to 15 years is 1.6% or 9,613 and 16 to 64 years of age is 4.8% and that translates into (127,702). The reported number of individuals in Kentucky 65 years and over with a sensory disability is 21.2% and that translates into 102,833. This category includes the blind and visually impaired population the Office for the Blind serves as well as other sensory disability populations.

The 2004 Census reports that in the U.S. there are 15.3% individuals with a sensory disability population 18 to 34 years enrolled in college or graduate school and 70.4% not enrolled. In Kentucky there are 11.5% of individuals with a sensory disability enrolled in college or graduate school and 80.3% not enrolled. According to the 2004 Census Bureau estimates, the employment rate of persons with a sensory disability in the U. S. ages 16 to 64 is 46.2% and the employment rate for Kentuckians with sensory disability is 36.9% falling 9.3% below the national rate. In comparison the U.S. rates of employment for employment for any disability population 16 to 64 is 36.9% and Kentucky's is 28.5% falling 8.4% below the national average.

In the U.S. it is estimated that nearly 17.6% of the population 5 years and over with a sensory disability are living below poverty level and in Kentucky 24.4% of the population 5 years and older with a sensory disability is living below the poverty level. The average in Kentucky for all families below the poverty level is 13.9% (U.S. 10.1%) and an individual below poverty level is 17.4% (U.S. 13.11%).

The last available data on the Deaf Blind population is from the 1998 Deaf-Blind Census. This Census reported the identification of 1,418 individuals of all age groups in Kentucky who are deaf-blind. These individuals were identified in all but eleven counties of the state. The county reporting the largest number is Jefferson with 339, which represents 24% of all those identified. Out of the 1,418 individuals who were identified in the census, only 114 were reported to be employed, translating to a 77% unemployment rate.



The low employment rate of deaf-blind individuals is indicative of the overall problem of high unemployment rates of individuals with disabilities.

In summary, the above statistics show the need for services for individuals with disabilities in the state of Kentucky with 6.7% of the population reporting a disability and 7.6% reporting two or more types of a disability. Only 11.5% of the populations with a sensory disability are enrolled in college or graduate school and the employment rates for this target population fall 8.4% below the national average. Strikingly alarming is the 77% unemployment rate for individuals who are deaf blind for Kentucky. 17.6% of the population 5 years and older with a sensory disability are living below the poverty level. This establishes the need for employment and educational supports for individuals with a sensory disability in the state of Kentucky. The services provided through the Kentucky Office for the Blind assist individuals to become self-sufficient through educational and employment opportunities (Goal 7, Goal 3).

#### Social Security State Statistics

State Statistics for December 2004 in Kentucky from the Social Security Administration for beneficiaries of Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance that provides benefits to workers and their families when the worker retires, dies, or becomes disabled represented 18.9 percent of the total population of the state and 92.9 percent of the state's population aged 65 or older with benefits paid to 784,910 individuals. In December 2004, in Kentucky 179,438 persons received federally administered SSI payments, 14,872 were aged, and 164,566 were disabled or blind. The total number of persons receiving a Social Security payment, a federally administered SSI payment or both in Kentucky in December of 2004 was 900,906. Federally administered payments totaled \$3.2 billion in December 2004. In Kentucky in 2003, an estimated 2.15 million residents worked in employment covered under the Social Security program and an estimated 2.19 million residents worked in employment covered under the Medicare program.

The above statistics indicate a high number of Kentuckians receiving cash benefits through social security system. This indicates the need to put in place the supports and resources for customers of the Kentucky Office for the Blind to access needed services. The Kentucky Office for the Blind works closely with Independence Place and the Center for Accessible Living on the Benefits Planning and Outreach Programs. This program provides OFB consumers information on how going to work will impact their benefits, allowing them the opportunity to make informed decisions regarding their employment. OFB provides training on Ticket to Work for all field staff and has in place a structure that supports this program (Goal 4).

#### Prevent Blindness America Statistics and State Statistics

Statistics reported through Prevent Blindness America for the State of Kentucky show that individuals age 40 and Older report a vision impairment is estimated to be 47,021, blindness 14,624, cataract 297,531 or glaucoma 29,898. The population aged 18 and

older with Diabetic Retinopathy is estimated at 75,960 and the population aged 50 and older with AMD 23,582.

The 2002 “Vision Problems in the U.S” provided by Prevent Blindness America through research of The National Eye Institute (NEI), a component of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), a Federal government agency, part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services indicates that a “Vision impairment is one of the most feared disabilities” and that the leading causes of vision impairment and blindness in the United States are primarily age-related eye diseases. The report defines a vision impairment as “20/40 or worse vision in the better eye with eye glasses” and legal blindness as “visual acuity with best correction in the better eye worse than or equal to 20/200 or a visual field extent of less than 20 degrees in diameter. It is estimated that blindness and vision impairment affects more than one million Americans age 40 or older.

The report indicates that the term “blindness” can have many connotations and is difficult to define precisely. The report further states that to many people, blindness refers to the complete loss of vision with no remaining perception of light; however, this ultimate form of complete blindness is rare. Far greater is the number of individuals who have a permanent loss of some, but not all, of their eyesight. As a result, the severity of vision loss can vary widely and may result in equally varying degrees of functional impairment. One important statement in the 2002 “Vision Problems in the U.S.” is that “almost everyone with blindness or vision impairment can benefit from vision rehabilitation that can help make the most of whatever vision remains.

In Kentucky the 2000 Census estimated that population age 40 and older 47,021 have a vision impairment with 31,766 females, 15,255 males, 43,835 white, 2,512 black, 239 Hispanic, and 435 of other races. The estimated statistics for Blindness for population age 40 and older in Kentucky was 14,624 with 10,138 females, 4,486 males, 13,432 whites, 1,048 blacks, 110, Hispanic, and 189 other races.

It is estimated that in Kentucky age 40 and older there are 477,530 cases of Myopia and 182,586 cases of Hyperopia. The estimated number of cases of Age-Related Macular Degeneration Age 50 and Older for Kentucky is estimated at 23, 582, Cataracts 297,531, Diabetic Retinopathy for ages 18 and Older is 75,960, and Glaucoma for ages 40 and older is 29,898.

The overall national rate for blindness and vision impairment is 2.85% and for Kentucky it is 2.68%. This rate for the total U.S. population age 40 and older of approximately 119 million, translates into more than 3.4 million older Americans who are blind or vision impaired.

These statistics establish a need for education in the State of Kentucky regarding the causes of blindness and the importance of rehabilitation training for individuals experiencing vision loss. The Office for the Blind recognizes the need for Orientation and Mobility and Independent Living training services. In response to this need, the OFB will provide statewide and specialized intensive services at the McDowell Center (Goal

9). OFB staff are knowledgeable of area resources in making referrals for the unmet needs of consumers.

### OFB 2005 Satisfaction Survey

The statewide satisfaction survey was conducted, compiled, summarized and prepared by the University of Kentucky Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling. The report was submitted to the OFB in January of 2006 by Ralph M. Crystal, Ph.D., C.R.C., Director, Graduate Program in rehabilitation Counseling. The purpose of the study was to assess consumer satisfaction with services provided by the Kentucky Office for the Blind. OFB developed the survey instrument for the Blind in conjunction with the State Rehabilitation Council and the Rehabilitation counseling program as a means of meeting the program evaluation requirements of the 1992 Amendments of the Rehabilitation Act. A total of 521 consumers whose cases had been closed in fiscal year 2005 were referred for participation and of this number 157 (30.1%) were respondents. Survey results were examined at state, regional, and caseload levels. The following four satisfaction performance indicators were examined in the study: 1) Consumer satisfaction with their level of participation in decision-making, 2) Consumer satisfaction with their interaction with vocational rehabilitation staff (OFB staff), 3) Consumer satisfaction with services and service providers; and 4) Consumer satisfaction with their employment outcomes.

Among the survey respondents, 71 (42.2%) were male and 86 (54.8%) were female. The education levels of the respondents varied from below the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, 38 (24.2%), high school education or GED, 80 (51%); college graduate, 28 (17.8%); and graduate school, 11 (7.0%). Seventy-one (45.2%) of these respondents were married, 27 (17.2%) were divorced, 8 (5.1%) were widowed, and 51 (32.5%) were single. The age breakdown of survey participants was as follows: Ages 16-19: 5 (3.2%); ages 20-29: 22 (14%); ages 30-39: 25 (15.9%); ages 40-49: 33 (21%); ages 50-59: 36 (22.9%); ages 60 – 69: 28 (17.8%), and ages 70-79: 6 (3.8%). Two participants did not report their age.

Overall, the results of the study indicate that consumers expressed high degrees of satisfaction with their experiences with staff, as well as with specific services received and outcomes achieved. For example, overall, 91.5% of consumers indicated that OFB services were excellent (72.7%) or good (18.8%) and 86.5% of consumers felt the quality of OFB services were appropriate and met their needs. Additionally, 10.3% of consumers indicated that OFB services were somewhat helpful and 3.2% indicated that services were not helpful. Additionally, consumer comments on an open-ended response questions were overwhelmingly positive. 69.5% rated the ability, knowledge, and vocational counseling skill of the counselors as Excellent. 66.7% rated the helpfulness OFB office staff as excellent. 77.3% stated that decisions were made jointly between them and their counselor and when asked about level of satisfaction with involvement in the decision making process 75% were very satisfied.

### DD Network Joint Needs Assessment

The Kentucky Developmental Disabilities Council conducted a joint needs assessment survey with the Interdisciplinary Human Development Institute (IHDI) at the University of KY, and Protection and Advocacy to determine the primary issues affecting individuals with disabilities in Kentucky in May 2005. The survey asked respondents to prioritize the nine areas of the DD Act and provide comments on services and needs. The sample size was 500 and there were 247 individuals from 49 urban and rural counties that responded. The majority of the respondents were between the ages of 40-59 years old (60%) and female (72%) with 36% having a disability while the majority of the respondents (64%) were families of individuals with a disabilities or service e providers. Of the respondents 86% were white, non-Hispanic; 8% were African American, 2% were Native American, and 3% were other ethnicities.

It is not surprising that the area identified with the least amount of improvement over the past five years was “transportation” (16%). Areas where the most improvement had occurred were “Education and Early Intervention (21%) and “Quality Assurance” (13%). The results of the survey for the question regarding the identification of the top three priorities for services to individuals with disabilities the following top areas of emphasis were indicated: 1) Education and Early Intervention, 2) Quality Assurance, 3) Health Related Issues, and 6) Employment with these areas comprising over 58% of the total responses.

#### Kentucky Instructional Materials Resource Center

The Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) Instructional Materials Resource Center reports that in 2005 there were 1,392 students in the 11 Special Education Cooperatives and inclusive in that number are students registered within Coop areas at private schools, KSD, VIPS, First Steps, or home schooled. Eighteen individuals are identified across the state as Deaf Blind. The Kentucky Department of Education reported in December 2004 that there were 460 students enrolled. This is inclusive of 120 School Districts and 56 Independent School Districts across the State of Kentucky. There are currently 123 full-time, 2 part-time, and 9 contract Visually Impaired Teachers.

This information establishes the need for a strong Transition program for students with collaboration among all the cooperatives across the state, the OFB and the Kentucky School for the Blind. In meeting this need OFB established Transition as a priority in 2007 (Goal 5). The OFB is partnering with the Big East Educational Cooperative, Morehead University and University of Louisville in the development of a transition week. OFB is working to bring the eleven special education cooperatives together with OFB counselors to strengthen that vital relationship. OFB is working collaboratively with Jefferson County Public schools in the development of a mentoring group for visually impaired students. Efforts are being made to connect with all organizations affiliated with student transition through attending conferences, exhibits, and presentations and written publications. OFB counselors are involved in developing relationships with disability support programs at Kentucky’s colleges and universities.

**(A). Individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;**

Individuals who are blind or significantly visually impaired are identified as an unserved or an underserved population due to their multiple challenges and needs. Specifically individuals who are Deaf Blind and individuals with a visual impairment that are dually diagnosed with significant disabilities requiring supported employment services. The Office for the Blind served 25 individuals in Supported Employment in 2005 with four individuals closed as a positive employment outcome. The Kentucky Office for the Blind recognizes the above needs of this population and is committed to the development of a program design of services to meet those needs. The OFB recognizes that in order for quality employment outcomes to occur specialized services of the highest quality such as rehabilitation teaching, assistive technology, and orientation and mobility are essential for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. These services include the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Independent Living Program, The Charles McDowell Rehabilitation Center, Business Enterprises, and the Kentucky Assistive Technology Service Network.

The OFB is currently operating under Order of Selection. There are five categories with four of the five open. The fifth category is closed covering "all other eligible individuals". If this category were open an individual with any type of eye condition could apply and be accepted for vocational rehabilitation services. For example, individuals needing visual services of any type would be eligible for services if they report through self disclosure one or more limitations and have a physicians referral. At one time, OFB took applications on individuals in Category Five placing them in active service. Individuals were placed on a waiting list and sent a letter notifying them that if additional funds became available services would begin. In rural Kentucky this was quite problematic. Individuals received a letter once a year notifying them funding was not available for services. As a result individuals contacted the legislature, local and state officials and the Governors Offices making complaints about being placed on a waiting list. The OFB made the decision not to place a vast number of individuals on a waiting list. Instead individuals were linked to the resources and services that met their individual needs. Individuals needing restoration services that do not qualify for medical services or are not interested in employment; such as homemakers, are referred by OFB staff to the Knights of Templar for services. Approximately 45 individuals in 2005 were referred to other agencies and organizations such as Lion's Club and the Lion's Eye Clinic in Louisville, Kentucky. Individuals needing glasses are referred to optical companies. OFB has researched area companies that will allow individuals to make payments on a sliding scale. This referral practice allows the OFB to avoid a waiting list for Category Five. The existing funding allows for OFB to provide extensive services to the other Four Categories open providing services to the significantly disabled population. Often in Category Four OFB is able to provide restoration services to individuals when their job is in jeopardy. This allows individuals to maintain their employment or seek new employment that is consistent with their unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interest and informed choice.

The OFB Deaf Blind Coordinator works collaboratively with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in providing specialized services to the deaf blind. Through these efforts many individuals who are deaf blind are working successfully. Staff training occurs regularly to equip staff with the needed skills in preparing them for serving persons in supported employment. The amount of hearing and vision loss is different with each person making their needs different as well. Under this collaborative partnership with OFB and OVR there are three Deaf Blind specialists who assist the counselors in providing services to the deaf blind. They provide information, technical help, and coordinate services for individuals who are deaf blind. Services delivered include: 1) testing to determine technology needs for both hearing and vision, 2) AT training, 3) guidance and counseling from a rehabilitation counselor, 4) job site accommodations, 5) training on communication, 6) resources and referral, 7) support services and 8) job training and preparation. Training is provided to individuals who work with other agencies and family members on deaf/blind services and issues. One area of identified need is making the Newsline service accessible to the deaf/blind population. OFB is working with KATS on a partnership that would provide a system to allow the deaf/ blind access to Newsline.

OFB has an emphasis on working directly with the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in securing the necessary supports in achieving successful employment outcomes for the underserved population. OFB is working with the State Computer Services Staff in setting up a database for information by counselor caseload to formulate monthly reports on each of the Standards and Indicators. This will allow monthly monitoring of progress on each of the standards and indicators. The data will assist in the identification of issues and trends occurring in the field. OFB administrators will develop strategies and solutions based on the information from this project. Implementation is targeted for the fall of 2006.

Obtaining and maintaining employment is a challenge due to the many concerns of achieving independence in carrying out day-to-day living activities. All issues surrounding independence specific to this disability population must be addressed in order for an individual to be successful in employment. Blindness or a vision loss has a catastrophic effect on an individual's life. Often this leaves them hopeless and unaware that through training and supports they can live full independent lives. Individuals who are blind or significantly impaired need the appropriate tools, training, employment supports and opportunities for learning in order to be successful and gain independence. This allows them to acquire the needed skills and life experiences while empowering them to make their own decisions about their employment. The statewide needs assessment identified a need to improve the services offered through the McDowell Center. Specifically addressing issues surrounding independence for the Blind and Visually Impaired. The McDowell Center services provide a positive experience for consumers; however, the agency recognizes the need for continuous quality improvement. A needs assessment of practices and policies of the McDowell Center will be conducted. Upon identifying areas of need, work groups will be formed to address issues relating to curriculum, employment training program, secondary education resources, Independent Living apartments, reporting and documentation, and other

identified areas. The Center will have an employment directed curriculum rather than a personal adjustment emphasis. The curriculum will address soft skills such as body awareness, behavior, blind mannerisms, dress, eye contact, job interview skills, and direct intervention.

As individuals live longer and develop age related vision problems the agency recognizes the need to prepare for the Baby Boomer Generation that will access services in the near future. Along those same lines, with all the technology advances in the field the individual skill and knowledge levels of transition students are higher as they leave the public school system. The OFB recognizes the importance of preparing our staff assuring they have the needed tools, up to date technology information and skills to serve students transitioning from high school. Raising our level of expectations is imperative in order to prepare consumers for employment.

Barriers to employment are significant, as many misconceptions regarding blindness still exist today. The Kentucky Office for the Blind recognizes that services to support individuals in obtaining and maintaining employment are crucial. There is a need to educate employers on the training and technology that is available for individuals making jobs accessible for people with visual impairments. In 2007 there will be an emphasis of technology through OFB's partnership with the Kentucky Assistive Technology Service (KATS) Network to enhance consumer access to technology (Goal 10). KATS and the OFB will partner in building a large laboratory of equipment at the McDowell Center. The lab will allow individuals to "try out" adaptive equipment for demonstration purposes and prescription recommendations. Another resource available is The Kentucky Assistive Technology Loan Corporation. Low interest loans are offered through its lending partner Fifth Third Bank for qualified applicants who need any type of equipment or home modification that will increase a person's mobility or enable them to become more independent. The Office for the Blind operates "See World Store" (located at the McDowell Center) that sells adaptive aids for work and home. Items may be purchased on line or in the store with the option to try out various devices at the store location. An Accessible Textbook Service Library Database is available through the Kentucky Office for the Blind and serves around 34 individuals semi annually.

Transportation for the Blind and Visually Impaired presents a crucial need directly related to this population and their ability to work. Through orientation and mobility training OFB consumers are able to move more freely about their homes, communities, educational and work settings. Transportation is still an ongoing service need. Inadequate transportation is definitely an impediment to employment, as individuals need stable reliable transportation to and from work. In many of the rural areas of Kentucky as in other states public transportation does not exist. Alternative methods of transportation must be utilized. The OFB has awarded monies from the WIA Governors Discretionary Funds. The monies are to be administered by the agency as a result of an Act passed relating to the operation of a motor vehicle in Kentucky in 2001 allowing for visually impaired driver's to use bioptics. The OFB developed a training instructional program for individuals to learn to drive with bioptics. Partnerships with the University of Kentucky for contract staff, with Low Vision Physicians, Kentucky Transportation

Department, Motor Vehicle Division and the Kentucky State Police were developed. Orientation and Mobility Instructors were recruited to teach consumers accepted in the program the use of bioptics. The development of testing routes and an evaluation skills ability test in cooperation with the State Police occurred. The OFB now provides statewide services for biopitc driving (Goal 8) increasing the number of drivers. To date the program has 52 licensed drivers. This program allows for increased employability of consumers meeting their transportation needs. The program has a priority of services established for admittance into the biopitic driving program. Individuals must meet one of the following criteria: 1) an individual is in jeopardy of losing their job due to a vision loss, 2) individuals seeking employment having the ability to drive, 3) individuals who have the ability for upward movement in their employment and 4) students in post secondary programs. Transportation issues are difficult in Kentucky as there is a limited resource outside of the metropolitan areas. When Consumers and counselors jointly develop an IPE, transportation issues are discussed along with informed choice and the consumer is advised of availability of transportation. Counselors provide extensive counseling about various methods of obtaining transportation services. Counselors and management staff attend local and statewide meetings dealing with transportation issues representing the blind and visually impaired population. OFB has staff representation on the advisory council for the Greater Louisville Transportation System representing the needs of individuals for the target population.

In 2005, the OFB had 25 active cases and four positive employment outcomes. Across the state there are 79 providers (inclusive of satellite operations). The OFB identified an ongoing need in the area of service provision for the Blind and Visually Impaired concerning the availability of funding and access to Supported Employment Services. Community rehabilitation providers lack the needed knowledge, training and experience in working with this specific disability population. CRP's statewide have a focus on the MRDD population lacking experience and expertise with the Blind and Visually Impaired. In addition, area CRP's do not have the monetary resources to develop programs specific to serving the Blind and Visually Impaired. The main issue for the population the agency serves is funding for "extended services". The Department of Mental Health and The Department of Mental Retardation provide funding for individuals meeting the set criteria. Often securing "extended services" for OFB consumers is problematic as they fall through the cracks due to the strict eligibility guidelines. For example, one individual served was an excellent candidate for Supported Employment due to his developmental disability of blindness and documented behavioral issues. The point of contention was that his IQ was one point over the requirement. Despite the efforts of the OFB, intervention through the consumer's congressman and the family's willingness to provide transportation in a rural area, the individual was determined not eligible for "extended services". Issues like this make it very difficult to carry out much needed services. The OFB will continue to provide the "blindness expertise" services such as Orientation and Mobility, Assistive Technology Assessments and new equipment and replacement during the extended services period. OFB counselors will assist job coaches with training. Independent living counselors will work with the consumer to teach or correct daily living skills that have to do with blindness that might interfere with employment. OFB acknowledges that adding these supports to



the “extended services provision requirement” is simply not enough and is committed to advocating for change given the strict eligibility guidelines CRP’s must adhere too.

The OFB has statewide agreements and receives technical assistance from the designated Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Supported Employment Coordinator. The OFB will continue to work closely with OVR in working with community rehabilitation providers in the utilization of services establishing collaborative working agreements and fee schedules. In 2007 the OFB staff representative on the DD Council will work through its involvement with the Council and sister organizations on addressing this need. OFB staff will become more involved in the local State Chapter for Persons in Supported Employment to gain knowledge and expertise and develop relationships with local community rehabilitation providers. There is an ongoing effort to have individuals with developmental disabilities included in the legislated funding source and OFB will continue to partner with other agencies to advocate for this needed funding.

### **(B) Identified Needs of Minority Populations and the Underserved and Unserved Populations**

Kentucky is a diverse state culturally and geographically in that its makeup consists of large cities, small, towns, and the rural Appalachian mountain area, coal mining and river towns. The Office for the Blind recognizes that because minority numbers in Kentucky are relatively small, and their cultures distinctive. It is critical that the special needs of blind and visually impaired persons with the most severe disabilities such as deaf blind, traumatic brain injury, persons with a mental illness in ethnic minorities in Kentucky must be addressed (Goal 13). Cultural differences will have an impact on the rehabilitation service delivery experience. The education and skills levels for minority populations may be a factor as well as the language barrier in a person’s success in obtaining and maintaining employment. In Kentucky, there is an increase in the Latino community. This is a difficult population to identify and work with, as they are transient in nature. The provision of training specific to this area will occur for all staff. Interpreters are provided for individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Deaf and Blind and for non-English speaking individuals. All materials are produced in alternate formats specific to the individual needs of the person served. There is a need for outreach to occur utilizing the expertise of other organizations such as the Urban League, minority coalitions and different faith based organizations that have a minority outreach. SRC staff recommended doing articles for the Urban League Newsletters in different areas of the state informing them of OFB services. OFB counselors target minorities with disabilities in areas that are heavily populated through local field offices such as Louisville and the public housing districts.

### **(C) Identified Needs of the Statewide Workforce Investment System**

The Kentucky Office for the Blind continues its involvement and partnership with the local and statewide Workforce Investment System in as outlined in this FFY 2007 State

Plan. There is still the need for capacity building in the area of accessible streamlined services. Although adaptive equipment is available, staff are not knowledgeable or comfortable with issues surrounding service delivery to individuals who are Blind and Visually Impaired. Counselors attend Local Workforce Investment Board meetings to provide information on how to access OFB services in that area and sit on the Pennyriple and Bluegrass Local Workforce Investment Boards to set local policy and procedures.

OFB has a presence in the local One-Stop establishing its commitment to partner with the local WIA One – Stop system and the benefits and opportunities offered. The Office for the Blind counseling staff is co-located in the Florence and Ashland One-Stops and has an itinerant presence in both comprehensive and affiliate One-Stops in Bell-Whitley, Bowling Green, Campbellsville, Clay County Jobsight, Corbin, Danville, Glasgow, Hopkinsville, Madisonville, Middlesboro, Mt. Vernon, Paducah, and Pikeville. OFB tracks on a weekly basis the number of One Stop Contacts across the staff averaging around 17 contacts each week. OFB staff is available to provide consultation on disability issues to the workforce system staff. The OFB received accessibility studies through the state Client Assistance Program. The Center for Accessible Living (CAL) recently completed and distributed a Customer Service and Sensitivity Training for One-Stops Final Report and Long-Term Recommendations for Improving One-Stop services to customers with Disabilities for the state. OFB will be working collaboratively with the SRC, CAL, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, KWIB and local WIBS in follow up to this report in a continued effort to improve the accessibility of the One-Stop System. Finally, Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRS) 186.640 established the Kentucky Bioptic Driving Program. This program enables visually impaired individuals to utilize bioptics in the operation of a motor vehicle in Kentucky. In FFY 2004, 19 WIA certified consumers enrolled in the program with 13 enrolling in FFY 2005. OFB will continue an active role in the One-Stop system in 2007 as reflected in the 2007 State Plan (Goals 1).

#### **(ii) Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs.**

The Office for the Blind recognizes the unique service needs of the Blind and Visually Impaired and is committed to meeting the challenge of staying current with best practices in the field of service delivery. The OFB has designed programs that meet the needs of individuals who are blind and visually impaired across the state. Community rehabilitation providers lack the needed knowledge, training and experience in working with this specific disability population. CRP's statewide have a focus on the MRDD population lacking experience and expertise with the Blind and Visually Impaired. In addition, area CRP's do not have the monetary resources to develop programs specific to serving the Blind and Visually Impaired. Supported Employment is an area in which arrays of issues need resolved such as training and long term follow along funding and supports. As a result there is a narrow service field for consumers of the OFB outside of the State Agency's own program design, services and expertise. As an identified area of need by the OFB the following goal outlined in Attachment 4.12 (c) (3) in more detail applies to this section: The OFB will increase and strengthen collaborative relationships with other community-based organizations and groups that provide supported employment that is tailored to individuals with more significant disabilities. The OFB

will work closely with OVR in working with community rehabilitation providers in the utilization of services in establishing collaborative working agreements and fee schedules. OFB Vocational Rehabilitation counselors will continue to regularly meet with supportive employment providers across the state to advocate acceptance of OFB consumers in their supported employment programs. The agency will strive to increase the number of Supported Employment Consumers and positive employment outcomes through these efforts. In 2007 the OFB staff representative on the DD Council will work with the Council and other sister organizations addressing issues regarding supported employment and the needs of the blind and visually impaired. The OFB receives information from different disability list serves inclusive of information regarding supported employment and will utilize this as a resource for staff. OFB staff will attend the Kentucky APSE conference allowing for needed training in the area of supported employment and networking with area Community Rehabilitation Providers strengthening those relationships.

## **Conclusion**

The Kentucky Office for the Blind will continue its work in conducting an ongoing needs assessment to capture the specific needs of individuals in the Commonwealth that are Blind and Visually Impaired. OFB will participate in the Region IV Evidence Based Management Initiative that is focusing on the development of a common needs assessment approach or method that will yield accurate information needed for evidence-based planning and decision making.

The Office for the Blind will work on assuring that the agency meets Standard 1.6 by putting an emphasis on jobs that allow for upward career movement and wage increases for consumers that exit the VR and KBE programs.

The Office for the Blind will work on increasing the number of unserved and underserved supported employment consumers and the number of positive employment outcomes. The agency will focus on increasing the number of CRP's providing "extended services" who are knowledgeable of service methods and techniques for the target population. The Office for the Blind will continue its collaboration with different advocacy organizations in supporting legislation for increased funding. OFB will focus on minority outreach to assure that the needs of minorities who are blind and visually impaired are met.

Transition will remain at the forefront of service needs including the collaboration of services for all parties involved increasing communication and the flow of services. OFB will continue its work on the pilot project "Insight" with Morehead State University and the University of Louisville anticipating the expansion of this project across the state.

The satisfaction survey showed a high level of satisfaction in services for consumers of the OFB. However, in order to increase the level of participation among closed cases the

OFB will conduct the surveys quarterly on all closed cases utilizing the University of Kentucky in the collection, compilation and reporting of data.

The agency will work collaboratively with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in obtaining interagency agreements with all the Institutions of Higher Learning in the State.

In assuring that our rehabilitation program at the McDowell Center is state of the art the agency will identify through the strategic planning and a needs assessment trends and service needs targeted for improvement. This will allow for our consumers to receive training and supports empowering them to reach their personal and vocational goals while improving their quality of life through independence in the community.

Accessibility and service design in the One-Stop will continue to be a need area addressed in assuring that consumers of the Office for the Blind can access the same services with the same participation as the non disabled. The agency will continue its involvement and work toward this common goal with other partners in the One Stop system.

## **ATTACHMENT 4.12 (c)(2)(A): Order of Selection**

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, requires an Order of Selection of individuals to be served, ensuring that individuals who have the most significant disabilities will be given first priority whenever all eligible individuals who apply cannot be served. The order of selection has been developed with the active participation of the State Rehabilitation Council and is consistent with 34 CFR 361.36. The Kentucky Office for the Blind is operating under a statewide Order of Selection due to budget constraints and a significant decrease in state funding. The OFB monitors services and expenditures on an ongoing basis to determine the need to open or close categories.

The order of selection gives first priority to those individuals with the most significant disabilities as defined by the OFB. The criterion to determine individuals with the most significant disabilities and the subsequent order of categories to be followed in selection of individuals to be provided services is based on a refinement of the criteria set forth in the definition of individual with a significant disability, specifically, the degree by which an individual's impairment seriously limits his or her functional capacities and the number of rehabilitation services needed by an individual.

### **DEFINITIONS**

**1. Applicant** means an individual who has submitted an application for vocational rehabilitation services. An individual is considered to have submitted an application when the individual, or the individual's representative, as appropriate, has filled out and signed an agency application form or has otherwise submitted a signed written request for services, and the individual is available for an assessment to determine eligibility and priority for services.

**2. Blind**, as defined in Kentucky Revised Statutes 163.460 (2), means a corrected visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye or a visual field of no more than 20 degrees in the better eye.

**3. Visual Impairment**, as defined in Kentucky Revised Statutes 163.460 (3), means a condition of the eye, which constitutes or results for the individual in a substantial impediment to employment.

**4. Eligible Individual** means an individual with a primary impairment of blindness or another visual impairment, who the Office for the Blind (OFB) has determined is an individual with a disability who requires vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, enter, engage in, retain or advance in employment.

**5. Functional Capacities** means the following:

- A. Orientation and Mobility:** The ability to travel independently to and from destinations in the community;

- B. Self-Care:** The ability to manage one's own situation, including meal preparation, house cleaning, and health and safety needs;
- C. Communication:** The ability to effectively exchange information through spoken or written words, sign language, Braille, concepts, gestures or other means;
- D. Work Skills:** The ability to do specific tasks required for a particular job;
- E. Work Tolerance:** The ability to sustain required levels of functioning in work related activities with or without accommodations;
- F. Interpersonal Skills:** The ability to make and maintain personal, family and community relationships; and
- G. Self-Direction:** The ability to independently plan, initiate, problem solve, organize and carry out goal-directed activities.

**6. Individual With a Significant Disability**, as defined in Section 7 (21) of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended in 1998, means:

- A.** An individual with a disability as defined under Section 7 (20) of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended in 1998;
- B.** Who has a significant physical or mental impairment, which for such individual constitutes or results in a substantial impediment to employment; and seriously limits one or more functional capacities (such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome;
- C.** Whose vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require multiple vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time; and
- D.** Who has one or more physical or mental disabilities resulting from amputation, arthritis, autism, blindness, burn injury, cancer, cerebral palsy, cystic fibrosis, deafness, head injury, heart disease, hemiplegia, hemophilia, respiratory or pulmonary dysfunction, mental retardation, mental illness, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, musculo-skeletal disorders, neurological disorders (including stroke and epilepsy), paraplegia, quadriplegia, and other spinal cord conditions, sickle cell anemia, specific learning disabilities, end-stage renal disease, or another disability or combination of disabilities determined on the basis of an assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs to cause comparable substantial functional limitations.

**7. Individual With The Most Significant Disability** means an eligible individual with a significant disability whose impairment seriously limits four or more functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome and whose rehabilitation requires three or more services.

**8. Presumption of Eligibility for Social Security Recipients and Beneficiaries** means that an individual who has been determined eligible under Title I or Title XVI of the Social Security Act is:

- Considered to be an individual with a significant disability; and
- Presumed to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services under Title I (provided the individual intends to achieve an employment outcome consistent with the unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual) unless the office can demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that such individual is incapable of benefiting from vocational rehabilitation services in terms of employment outcome due to the severity of the disability of the individual.

**9. Order Of Selection** means the order to be followed in determining which priority categories of eligible individuals shall be provided vocational rehabilitation services when the Office for the Blind does not have funds to provide such services to all eligible individuals ensuring that first priority for services is given to those individuals who have the most significant disabilities.

**10. Priority Categories** means the following rank of categories of eligible individuals to be followed in the order of selection:

**A. Priority Category One** - Eligible individuals with the most significant disability whose impairment seriously limits four or more functional capacities in terms of employment outcome and whose rehabilitation requires three or more services.

**B. Priority Category Two** - Eligible individuals with a significant disability whose impairment seriously limits three or more of functional capacities in terms of employment outcome and whose rehabilitation requires three or more services.

**C. Priority Category Three** - Eligible individuals with a significant disability whose impairment seriously limits two or more functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome and whose rehabilitation requires two or more services.

**D. Priority Category Four** - Eligible individuals with a significant disability whose impairment seriously limits one or more functional capacities in terms of an employment outcome and whose rehabilitation requires two or more services.

**E. Priority Category Five** - All other eligible individuals. (This category is currently closed)

ORDER OF SELECTION SERVICE  
DETERMINATION AND ADMINISTRATION

1. **Order of Selection will not use any of the following factors in determining eligible individuals:**
  - **Residency duration**
  - **type of disability; age, gender, race, color, or national origin,**
  - **source of referral,**
  - **type of expected employment outcome**
  - **need for specific services or anticipated cost of services**
  - **or the income level of the individual or its family.**
2. The order of selection shall be implemented on a statewide basis.
3. The order of selection shall be implemented to assure that eligible individuals with the most significant disabilities are provided services before other eligible individuals.
4. The office shall conduct an assessment to determine whether an individual is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, and the individual's priority under the order of selection. The individual will receive notification of their assignment to a particular category and their right to appeal their category assignment.
5. The order of selection shall not affect the:
  - The acceptance of referrals and applicants;
  - The provision of assessment services to determine whether an individual is eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, and the individual's priority under the order of selection; and
  - Services needed by any eligible individual who has begun to receive services under an individualized plan for employment prior to the effective date of the order of selection, irrespective of the severity of the eligible individual's disability.
6. The office will ensure that all funding arrangements for providing services under the State plan, including third-party arrangements and awards under the establishment authority, are consistent with the order of selection.
7. The Executive Director of the Office for the Blind shall direct the order of selection by designating in written memorandum, the priority categories to be served.
8. An eligible individual shall be immediately reclassified into a higher priority category whenever appropriate justification exists in the case record of the individual.



9. In the order of selection each eligible individual within a closed priority category shall be placed on a waiting list until such time as the priority category is opened.
10. The office will assure that eligible individuals, who do not meet the order of selection criteria, shall have access to services provided through the information and referral system in accordance to the 1973 Rehabilitation Act. These services will include referral to other Federal and State programs including the statewide workforce investment programs.
11. When a priority category is to be opened for services, the Executive Director shall issue an implementing memorandum to staff, with instructions that appropriate services delayed under the order of selection may be provided.
12. At such time that the agency finds that it is able to serve those individuals in any closed priority category, that category will be re-opened. The timeline for this would be a year, unless the financial situation should change drastically. Circumstances that would allow this to occur include a decrease in the number of referrals or other sources that would result in additional funds, which could be utilized to serve these individuals.

### **NOTIFICATION AND APPEAL**

When a request for services by an eligible individual is affected by the order of selection, the individual shall be immediately notified of such in writing, and provided with information on procedures for individual rights for appeal, and how the Client Assistance Program may provide help in the process.

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### **2005 YEAR END OUTCOMES AND COSTS 10/1/04 THROUGH 9/30/05**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Active Cases</b>	<b># of Employment Outcome</b>	<b>Actual Associated Costs Per Category Per Closure (26)</b>	<b>Actual Associated Costs Per Category</b>
One	362	56	\$49,595.66	\$401,110.16
Two	444	87	\$81,229.50	\$529,848.50
Three	565	153	\$250,608.00	\$845,601.84
Four	306	120	\$209,455.70	\$613,211.92

Five	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Total	1,677	416	\$590,889.61	\$2,389,772.42

The office has implemented an Information and Referral System that allows the tracking of all individuals that either does not meet the order of selection criteria or those just wanting information. The office keeps a written record of all of these individuals.

The number of individuals who applied but did not meet the Order of Selection criteria in 2005 was 0.

Total Costs of services and administration for 2005 was: \$8,969,122

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### 2006 ESTIMATED OUTCOME GOALS AND TIMEFRAMES

Time Frame
10/1/05 through 9/30/06

CATEGORY	ESTIMATE OF # TO BE SERVED	TOTAL ESTIMATED ASSOCIATED COSTS	AVERAGE ESTIMATE COST PER PERSON	EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES ESTIMATES
Category One	365	\$680,800.00	\$1,865.21	60
Category Two	444	\$691,200.00	\$1,556.75	87
Category Three	570	\$940,000.00	\$1,649.12	150
Category Four	310	\$650,600.00	\$2,098.71	120
Category Five	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,689</b>	<b>\$2,962,600.00</b>	<b>\$1,792.45</b>	<b>417</b>

\*Year to Date 0 individuals did not meet order of selection criteria and were referred to other services.

**A. # of individuals entering services in 2006 with individualized plans for employment = 840**                      **Estimated Total Costs: \$4,505,200**

**B. Estimated # determined eligible entering services in 2006= 849**

**Estimated Total Costs: \$4,553,600**

**C. Total Projected Services and Administrative Costs inclusive of facilities, salaries, benefits, outreach activities, and required statewide studies: \$9,058,800.**

**D. Projected revenues and projected number of qualified personnel for the program.** Revenues are projected at a minimal growth and the number of personnel at will not increase with a state imposed cap. This will allow the Kentucky Office for the Blind adequate revenue and personnel (104) to cover the costs identified in A, B & C and to ensure the provision of the full range of services to individuals eligible under the order of selection for the 2006 calendar year.

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## 2007 ESTIMATED OUTCOME GOALS AND TIMEFRAMES

Time Frame
10/1/06 through 9/30/07

CATEGORY	ESTIMATE OF # TO BE SERVED	TOTAL ESTIMATED ASSOCIATED COSTS	AVERAGE ESTIMATE COST PER PERSON	EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES ESTIMATES
Category One	365	\$680,800.00	\$1,865.21	60
Category Two	445	\$700,200.00	\$1,573.48	88
Category Three	570	\$940,000.00	\$1,649.12	150
Category Four	310	\$650,600.00	\$2,098.71	120
Category Five	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,690</b>	<b>\$ 2,971,600.00</b>	<b>\$1,796.63</b>	<b>418</b>

**A. Estimated # of individuals entering services in 2007 with individualized plans for employment = 946      Total Estimated Costs: \$5,121,500**

**B. Estimated # determined eligible entering services in 2007 = 744**  
Total Estimated Costs: \$4,027,900

C. Total Projected Services and Administrative Costs inclusive of facilities, salaries, benefits, outreach activities, and required statewide studies: \$9,149,400

**D. Projected revenues and projected number of qualified personnel for the program.** Revenues are projected at a minimal growth and the number of personnel will not increase with a state imposed cap. This will allow the Kentucky Office for the Blind adequate revenue and personnel (104) to cover the costs identified in A, B & C and to ensure the provision of the full range of services to individuals eligible under the order of selection in 2007.

## ATTACHMENT 4.12(d)(1): State's Strategies and Use of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities

### **To Address Needs Identified in the Comprehensive Assessment and to Achieve Identified Goals and Priorities**

The Kentucky Office for the Blind's mission is: *To provide opportunities for employment and independence to individuals with visual disabilities.* To accomplish this mission, the following strategies were developed for the established goals and priorities outlined in Attachment 4.12 (c)(1). Each goal is assigned to an OFB staff person or work group to assure that each strategy action step is carried out and goals are met. The designated staff person or work group will report quarterly on a goal grid to the Executive Staff Liaison the progress for each goal strategy. A quarterly report will be compiled of the results of the steps taken in meeting the set goals and reviewed by the OFB steering committee and State Rehabilitation Council. The Council and Steering Committee will quarterly review the summarized reports monitoring the agencies performance in meeting the State Plan Goals and Priorities.

**Based on the identified needs through the comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment the State Rehabilitation Council and Kentucky Office for the Blind have established the following Goals and Priorities and Strategies:**

#### **Priorities:**

- **Transition Services in 2007 for students as they move from high school to post secondary activities.**
- **Meeting the Standards and Performance Indicators established by the Rehabilitation Services Administration resulting in increased positive employment outcomes.**
- Increase the quality and scope of services and staff expertise at the McDowell Center.
- Increasing funding mechanisms to allow for sufficient resources in meeting OFB's goals and priorities.
- Monitor the Efficiency and Effectiveness of OFB operations

#### **The OFB has established the following Strategies:**

Goal 1: Establish and maintain working relationships with each of the thirty-one (31) Kentucky comprehensive One-Stop Career Centers and satellites.

##### **Strategies:**

- Office for the Blind staff will establish linkages through local involvement on committees and boards.

- OFB Executive Director will attend the quarterly Kentucky Workforce Investment Board on a State Level.
- OFB staff will continue our advocacy and technical expertise as to the issues of accessibility of services through the Career Centers.

Goal 2: Continue our work and partnership with the State Rehabilitation Council in reviewing program effectiveness.

Strategies:

- OFB will seek input and recommendations from SRC
- Conduct quarterly consumer satisfaction surveys
- Maintain financial commitment

Goal 3: The Office for the Blind will meet the Standards and Performance Indicators established by the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

Priority Strategies:

- Focus on service delivery that reflects RSA standards and core competencies.
- Train staff as to the various indicators and their importance in service delivery stressing the emphasis in consumers setting vocational goals that enable them to reach positive employment outcomes

Goal 4: Increase the Number of Tickets being assigned to the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program authorized by the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (TWWIA).

Strategies:

- Branch Managers and OFB policy analysis will develop and implement a policy on handling ticket assignment.
- Training will occur for existing staff as well as new hires on how to handle inquiries and ticket assignment.
- Continue Internal Incentive Reward system for direct service staff in working with consumers obtaining SGA.

Goal 5: The OFB will place a priority on Transition Services in 2007 for students as they move from high school to post secondary activities.

Strategies:

- OFB will utilize the agency developed Student Transition Handbook for use as a resource for students and their families.
- OFB will continue its partnership with the Big East Educational Coop, Kentucky School for the Blind, Morehead University and U of L in the provision of a transition week with junior and senior students with significant visual impairments.
- OFB will pursue a partnership with the Jefferson County Schools in developing a mentoring program for visually impaired students.
- OFB staff will develop relationships with the disability support programs at Kentucky's colleges and universities.

- OFB staff will attend conferences and make a concentrated effort to network with organizations affiliated with transition through exhibits, speaking engagements and written publicity.
- OFB staff will research and identify transition resources, publications and best practices in the field to build a knowledge and library base of materials.
- All informational materials will be made available in alternate formats for individuals

Goal 6: OFB will support staff through financial incentives, in order to recruit, hire and maintain a quality highly skilled workforce.

Strategies:

- OFB has a personnel classification system in place that rewards individuals obtaining a Master's Degree and Certification.
- OFB will hire and maintain certified staff in keeping with CSPD requirements.

Goal 7: Increase the number of positive employment outcomes for Blind and Visually Impaired consumers receiving specialized services from OFB.

Strategies:

- A special emphasis will be on training in the area of job development and placement to increase employer relationships and positive consumer employment outcomes.
- Continue the partnership with the Office for Vocational Rehabilitation and dual casework of Deaf/Blind services.
- Increased earnings, transportation needs, benefits and career advancement will be a focus of service delivery through quality employer driven initiatives.
- Expansion of Supported Employment Services

Goal 8: Increase the # of bioptic driving trainees and licensures

Strategies:

- Increase the availability of regional trainers through private contracts
- Research the availability of resources.
- Develop a case delivery system and establish program standards along with documentation requirements and consumer friendly information materials

Goal 9: Increase the quality and scope of services and staff expertise at the McDowell Center.

Strategies:

- Strategic Planning to identify opportunities, threats, weaknesses and strengths of operation and set long term goals for the McDowell Center.
- Revise and improve health and safety standards to provide a safe environment for students and staff at the McDowell Center.

- Modify and add existing services offered to build a quality operation
- Improve the infrastructure of the facility
- Research and explore the feasibility of the McDowell Center Land Development Project

Goal 10: Emphasis of technology through OFB's partnership with the Kentucky Assistive Technology Service ( KATS) Network.

**Strategies:**

- Enhance consumer access to technology
- Increase products and update technology in the McDowell Lab
- Provide OFB staff training regarding KATS as an expert in accessibility and disability research
- Enhance connectivity of OFB website with KATS Network website regarding assistive technology services

Goal 11: Business Enterprise Services will increase employment opportunities for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

**Strategies:**

- Research, bid and obtain new vending opportunities.
- Maximize net profit in existing vending sites.
- Train and license new vendors
- Negotiate, award, and implement new 5 year interstate contracts  
Generating KBE program revenues

**Goal 12: Streamline and enhance the Office for the Blind Functions including Strengthening of the Human Resource Development Program.**

**Strategies:**

- OFB will provide training and learning opportunities for staff to increase skills acquisition.
- OFB will refine the current training plan ensuring all staff have professional development opportunities and streamline current methods for data collection and tracking
- Trainings in keeping with all regulatory requirements will occur as well as service delivery needs.
- OFB will have a focus on succession planning and work with Georgia State Region IV RRCEP on the development of strategies for succession management planning.

Goal 13: The OFB will increase Services to minorities, individuals with significant disabilities that are underserved and unserved through supported employment.

**Strategies:**

- OFB will identify strategies of outreach to individuals who are minorities, individuals with significant disabilities that are underserved and unserved.
- OFB staff will work with advocacy groups to increase the quality of services to the underserved and unserved.
- OFB will increase and expand the services to the unserved and underserved Deaf/ Blind population.
- OFB will maintain 4 regional and satellite offices across the state assuring statewide service in rural and urban areas. To meet the needs of the underserved and unserved each office is staffed with Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Assistants, Assistive Technology, Independent Living and Orientation and Mobility staff. Counselors travel across the state covering 120 county area.
- OFB will increase and strengthen collaborative relationships with other community-based organizations and groups that provide supported employment that is tailored to individuals with more significant disabilities.
- Development and add a cultural diversity component to the new hire orientation curriculum
- OFB counselors will identify and develop partnerships with local agencies and organizations that have a minority focus in their operations.
- OFB will utilize the expertise and assistance of the Kentucky Office of Minority and Empowerment
- OFB Management will actively recruit and interview minority applicants from state registers that are qualified for all available agency job openings.

Goal 14: Increase funding mechanisms to allow for sufficient resources in meeting OFB's goals and priorities.

**Strategies**

- Explore grant opportunities through different venues for expansion and innovation in service delivery.
- Advocate for increased funds from local, state and federal officials for additional service needs.
- Prepare proposals for WIA discretionary funds for bioptic driving program and other potential initiatives

Goal # 15: Monitor the Efficiency and Effectiveness of OFB operations

**Strategies**

- Determine personnel capacity for streamlined efficient service and operational needs



- Monitor costs in association with revenue above expenses and areas for more streamlined efficiencies (indirect costs, resources, buying expenditures)
- Revise OFB policies and procedures in order to provide streamlined effective and efficient services

#### **Goal # 16: Develop and Implement a Statewide Marketing Plan**

##### **Strategies:**

- Identify a marketing initiative team that represents all facets of the VR program
- Identify target audience for marketing initiatives
- Develop strategies that focus on target audience (employers, consumers, referral sources and vendors).
- Utilize Annual Report as a marketing tool
- Implement marketing plan

#### **Goal # 17: New Hire Orientation**

##### **Strategies:**

- Review current processes and research best practices in other agencies
- Streamline Orientation Processes to meet new hire staff needs in order to reduce voluntary separations and increase staff productivity
- Redesign New Hire Orientation Curriculum
- Implement ongoing training of new staff to meet all regulatory standards both internal and external of the agency

### **Innovation and Expansion Activities**

**Title I funds for innovation and expansion activities for FFY 2007 will be used to increase and enhance employment opportunities for individuals who have the most significant disabilities. The two areas of focus are:**

- 1) Transition for Innovation and 2) Systems Change at the McDowell Center for Expansion of Activities.

#### **The Charles McDowell Center**

Through input from the statewide assessment the following issues and trends were identified. There is an increase in the number of consumers referred with multiple disabilities, a demonstrated difficulty in placing individuals with multiple disabilities, and satisfaction summaries and personal interviews of consumers indicating needed improvements for the areas of training and skills acquisition. The Office for the Blind will have a priority focus on programmatic system changes.

**The UT RCEPT provided negotiations' training to all McDowell Center Staff. Through this training staff were afforded the opportunity to**

**brainstorm and make recommendations as to needed programmatic changes. Teams are being formed and various new programs will be introduced as well enhancing training curriculum for consumers equipping them with the needed knowledge, skills and experiences to enter the work force. The goal is to enhance staff skills in working with a diverse population with an emphasis on “Integrated Learning” setting higher expectations and benchmarks for students with a defined curriculum that will be tailored to each individual. This expansion activity is targeted for the FFY 2007 year. Progress on all the set strategies for this project will occur quarterly. A year-end evaluation to determine progress according to the set timelines will occur and the need for revision.**

## **Transition Services**

Kentucky is divided into 120 counties with county and city schools totaling approximately 200. There are thirteen state Co-Op's covering the various areas formed with the specific purpose of utilizing shared resources for purchasing and training staff and the provision of student services. OFB has worked collaboratively with the special education teachers in the co-op's to make a smooth transition for students. As in other states, this is not always a smooth process as there are gaps in services and referrals do not always occur in a timely manner to the OFB. As a result, an innovative pilot is under development and implementation. OFB's transition coordinator met with the school staff from one of the area co-op's giving a presentation about the services through the OFB. This group is working a “transition week” to take place on campus at the university level for high school students. OFB has entered into an agreement with the co-op and Eastern Kentucky University on this project. The pilot will have some of the following components: 1) staff counseling for class curriculum, 2) orientation and mobility, 3) career counseling, 4) recreation and 5) other related classes. Students targeted for this pilot are individuals who are blind and visually impaired. The OFB has committed funds to the project.

After completion of the pilot project, an evaluation will occur to determine if the “Transition Week” will be ongoing. The tentative plans are for OFB to offer this program to a minimum of 4 other co-op's targeting Louisville, Southwestern KY, Southeastern KY and Northern KY. This will give students statewide access to the weeklong intensive program giving them a hands on experience in understanding Transition. Students will learn the importance of planning for a smooth transition into a secondary education or employment environment. The end result will be increased positive employment outcomes.

The OFB developed transition materials that are kept current and revised as needed. Each student referred to the OFB is provided a Handbook for Transition and the handbook is made available to the community at large via our web site. The new case

management system being developed will flag for review all transition students referred to be sure no child is left behind. The Jefferson County Greater Louisville vision teachers have requested an informational tour of the Charles W. McDowell Center on an annual basis. This will allow area vision teachers the opportunity to gain knowledge regarding the centers skills acquisition programs giving them a clear concept of its role in the transition planning process. Vision teachers can utilize this information in IEP planning for the students. In other areas of the state, counselors and managers attend the Kentucky School for the Blind Outreach Programs with parents and their children that have visual impairments. The OFB sends representation to the annual Association of Educators for Rehabilitation. The OFB will have a priority emphasis Transition for the FFY 2007

## **ATTACHMENT 4.12(e): Evaluation and Report of Progress in Achieving Identified Goals and Priorities and Use Of Title I Funds for Innovation and Expansion Activities**

The goals and priorities for the Kentucky Office for the Blind for the FFY 2007 State Plan were developed in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council and input from consumers and other stakeholders based on the comprehensive statewide assessment conducted in FFY 2006. The revised goals, priorities and strategies for achievement are outlined in this FFY 2007 State Plan.

For the purposes of evaluation and reporting this section will report on the progress of the previous year goals and priorities and the results of the Kentucky Office for the Blind's performance on the standards and indicators in FFY 2005 established pursuant to section 106 of the Act. The focus of these goals and priorities is to improve the provision of, and expand, employment services in integrated settings to individuals who are blind or significantly visually impaired and may include individuals with sensory, cognitive, physical and mental impairments, who have traditionally not been served by the state vocational rehabilitation agency.

### **Identified Goals and Priorities**

**Develop and implement innovative methods to expand and improve job placement services, which will result in new opportunities for individuals to prepare for, secure, retain or regain and employment outcome.**

OFB staff attended a conference in April 2005 "Building Trusting Relationships" (BTR) to enhance employer relationships and increase placement of individuals with visual disabilities into competitive placement. Phase II training of this program occurred in March. Staff also received individualized training on direct placement for individual consumers. This training resulted in the development of an employer database that is posted on the agency intranet site for staff sharing. All new hires are trained in this program to assure conformity across the agency. The program and philosophy of BTR is the first phase of a new initiative entitled Enhancing Employment Opportunities for the OFB. Rehabilitation staff works in teams to build new employer relationships, and charting employer contacts and appointments.

Placement efforts are included into annual performance goals for the vocational counselors. Beginning in last quarter of the FFY 2006 monthly data reports by caseload of status on performance indicators will be utilized in maximizing performance goals throughout the year.

The Business Opportunities Committee of the SRC had a platform of increasing existing employment opportunities for consumers. The committee regularly discusses job opportunities and are all committed to sharing information with agency staff. Various jobs such as L.C. Industries, American Printing House, and School systems are brought to the table for dialog and members are more than willing to assist with placement. A

mailing of four-hundred (400) letters initiated by the SRC occurred to employers, containing a CD regarding agency services information. The second part of this marketing approach was a follow up communication with the employers by the Vocational Rehabilitation counselors and assistants.

Staff attended the Job Development Placement Association (JTPA) at the Kentucky Rehabilitation Association annual meeting. At this training, a full day session was offered on Placement by the TN RCEPT with three OFB counselors in attendance. This training occurred for all field services staff and management. A follow up training occurred at the 2005 OFB fall conference for 3 days. All counselors, assistants and direct managers attended as well as the individual responsible for Work Experience at McDowell Center.

Training on EKOS, a database used by One-Stop and the Employment Services Office of the Department for Workforce Development was provided to all VR counselors. This one (1) day training taught personnel to register our consumers into the system and facilitate a job search for open leads. This training effort served as a dual role in expanding the OFB partnership with the Workforce System and to assure our consumers receive WIA Core Services in keeping with the requirements.

One VR counselor attended a three-day intensive training on Workforce issues at the Southeastern Employment Association training in Florida. The Director of Consumer Services and one counselor attended a 3 day Workforce Issues Training in Ashville, NC. Since OFB have local board involvement, both of these trainings were funded through the One- Stops in those workforce investment areas.

The Deaf Blind Coordinator along with a Coordinator from the OVR program developed and conducted a professional training for VR staff that was held in partnership with The Helen Keller Institute. Strategies for Support for Placement of combined vision and hearing loss toward positive employment outcomes was the topic. Counselors attended from both OFB and OVR. A video was developed by an OFB counselor and will be used for future training by both agencies as well as by Helen Keller staff.

The OFB developed a solid working relationship with CitiBank, a call center in Louisville, KY. OFB staff assisted in the development of programs to enable consumers to become employed. Assistive Technology staff worked extensively with CitiBank employees in ensuring that three consumers received the needed accommodations and adaptive equipment to be successful. Staff worked alternate hours and provided individualized on site coaching supports and training on the usage of the adaptive equipment and needed accommodations.

**In collaboration with Kentucky schools, establish programs to enhance transition and employability of students with visual disabilities.**

The Kentucky Office for the Blind is currently working with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in obtaining IHE agreements to meet the requirements for interagency coordination between the state vocational rehabilitation agency (VR) and institutions of higher education (IHE) in section 101(a) (8) (B) of the Act and at 34 CFR 361.53(d). The OFB participates with the Kentucky Department of Education and twenty other state agencies on the Kentucky Interagency Executive Transition Council. This Council's agreement provides for a statewide system of coordination among agencies in the delivery of transition services. This coordination is designed to facilitate the transition of students with disabilities from educational services in school to vocational rehabilitation services. OFB has one (1) Statewide Interagency Cooperative Agreement with the Kentucky Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, Kentucky Office for the Blind and the Kentucky Department of Education that ensures that each eligible student with a disability in the state is promptly provided with the appropriate transition services. The state agency representatives are comprised of a diverse group of twenty agencies including, but not limited to, state education (universities and community and technical college system) and human service agencies, consumers, and employers. The Kentucky Office for the Blind has a Commonwealth of Kentucky Cooperative Agreement with the Department of Education and the Kentucky School for the Blind to establish plans, policies and procedures whereby Office for the Blind and Kentucky School for the Blind may carry out responsibilities to assure that youth with visual disabilities enrolled in Kentucky schools receive a free appropriate public education and public services, including vocational rehabilitation services, necessary to make a successful transition from school to employment.. These agreements are effective upon the date of signing by all participating agencies in the State of Kentucky and remain in effect until terminated. The agency Transition Coordinator has been assigned the responsibility for the facilitation of these activities. Counselors are working with State education officials to ensure that main-streamed transition students have work experience opportunities throughout the entire state. The agency has developed strategies to improve the transition process for all students who have a visual impairment in the Kentucky School System.

OFB staffs participate with the Department of Education and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in the Statewide School-to-Work Transition Project. This project provides assistance to schools in on-site transition services including identification of youth in need of services, development of Individualized Transition plans (ITP), and programs of community based education and work experience. OFB Vocational Counselors or the Transition Coordinator provide technical assistance and consultation for schools requesting or needing services.

OFB has a collaborative working relationship with the Kentucky School for the Blind (KSB) in providing transition services to students attending KSB. The agency monitors progress of the program and students through quarterly reports and career evaluations. OFB's Transition Coordinator works directly with KSB staff and is responsible for the

implementation of this program. This collaborative partnership has resulted in improved and open communication with staff regarding all aspects of the transition process.

In November of 2005 the Kentucky Office for the Blind sponsored a “transition weekend” for students. This activity provided an opportunity for students and their parents to learn how an individual with a visual impairment prepares to move from school to work. Sessions included job readiness assessments, hands-on technology demonstrations, panel discussions, resource information, and futures planning.

OFB staff participate in the Kentucky Deaf-Blind Transition Project, which helps promote cooperative transition services for youth who are deaf-blind, and who are students at the Kentucky School for the Blind, the Kentucky School for the Deaf, and other educational institutions.

The OFB transition Coordinator participates in the Commonwealth’s Workforce Investment Act’s Youth Sub-Committee. The sub-committee is comprised of youth service providers from all of the local areas, education officials, school-to-work staff and other individuals with an interest in other issues associated with transition.

OFB staff met with a newly formed group of youth from the KY National Federation for the Blind and discussed Transition. This group can play an active role in information sharing and networking for students who may be in need of OFB services at the time of transition. Transition issues are discussed at the SRC quarterly meetings where both NFB and the KY Council for the Blind and other advocacy organizations are represented.

KYAHEAD, The Association for Disability Services Units of State Universities extended an invitation for OFB staff to attend their annual meeting on Transition. This is an opportunity for OFB staff to present on OFB services, obtain training, expand resources, and network with university and school staff across the state.

OFB’s Accessible Textbook Services staff has proven quite valuable to this group. The Accessible Textbook Services program of OFB has attended meetings with the KY Virtual University board and discussed various methods of a statewide “Repository” for handling digital books. Through OFB’s involvement we have been designated as the temporary holder of this on-line “Repository” until a National Repository is developed. OFB’s expertise and knowledge in this area in updating and maintaining a digital library led into this role serving the entire state. The Coordinators of the programs, the Director of Consumer Services, and the Director of KY Assistive Technology Services have served on this board and worked to develop these partnerships. As a result the universities are more cognizant of the importance of following accessibility standards. Involvement in appropriate standards and programs and OFB’s offer to test on-line programs has been beneficial to blind and significantly visually impaired students statewide. The Assistive Technology staff has put considerable time into testing these programs.

Training was provided to staff in keeping with the mandate of the full development of the IPE prior to the students' graduation from High School. To reinforce this training concept, four students from across the state attended a pilot program at the McDowell Center between the summer and fall school term. Through their experiences and planning, students gained confidence in themselves and a fuller understanding of the role of OFB staff.

There was an emphasis on providing Transition Services across the state in rural areas. Staff has attended fairs and post secondary education forums to meet with instructors and students to explain Transition and the opportunities available from OFB.

### **Utilize a continuous improvement model for the Charles McDowell Rehabilitation Center.**

There was an increase in work experience opportunities at the McDowell Center from 28 in FFY 2004 to 31 in FFY 2005. This expansion project will continue in FFY 2007. Training for all McDowell Center Staff occurred on the implementation of a full schedule for consumers. A consumer guide was developed for consumers that detail the program (training), the role of staff, expectations and goals for all consumers attending the McDowell Center Training Program. The OFB reviewed and re-designed the recreation therapy position allowing for flexibility in the position that would meet the needs for consumers with a staff person in place during alternate hours (evenings and weekends). This will allow for the provision of meaningful recreational activities outside of the traditional day program hours. The McDowell Center numbers of GED educational outcomes increased in 2005 resulting in additional funding from Adult Education Department.

The land surrounding the McDowell Center was donated to the OFB. Research has occurred into the feasibility of the development of a recreational area with a training component for bioptic driving and orientation and mobility. The University of Louisville at no cost to the agency did a study and recommendations regarding environmental and appropriate land issues. Meetings with elected officials occurred and the indications are that it appears this land will adjoin a new city park. In FFY 2004 and 2005 there were extensive repairs made to the center building. In the upcoming FFY 2006 and 2007 years a roof construction project approved by cabinet will occur.

### **Implement the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, the Workforce Investment Act and the Ticket to Work and Work Improvement Act.**

Having been an active participant in Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) activities since Kentucky was selected as an early implementation state for WIA activities in 1999, the Kentucky Office for the Blind remains a strong proponent of WIA's guiding principles to consolidate, coordinate and improve employment, training, literacy and vocational rehabilitation programs.



Most recently, Kentucky's Strategic Five-year State Workforce Investment Plan July 1, 1999 – June 30, 2003 was updated as The Kentucky State Plan: Two Years of the Strategic Five-Year Plan for Workforce Investment July 1, 2005 – June 20, 2007. The Kentucky Office for the Blind provided input during the plan revision process:

- October 6, 2004 – initial state plan revision meeting with partner representatives
- October 28, 2004 – follow-up state plan revision meeting with partner representatives
- November 18, 2004 – follow –up state plan revision meeting with partner representatives

Local Workforce Investment Boards (LWIB) also develop plans tailored to the specific needs of Kentucky's respective local workforce investment areas. Counselors not only attend LWIB meetings to provide information on how to access OFB services in that area, but also sit on the Pennyriple and Bluegrass Local Workforce Investment Boards to set local policy and procedures.

Presence in a local One-Stop setting is a clear indicator that partner agencies truly embrace the benefits and opportunities offered by the WIA One-Stop business model. The Office for the Blind counseling staff is co-located in the Florence and Ashland One-Stops and has an itinerant presence in both comprehensive and affiliate One-Stops in Bell-Whitley, Bowling Green, Campbellsville, Clay County Jobsight, Corbin, Danville, Glasgow, Hopkinsville, Madisonville, Middlesboro, Mt. Vernon, Paducah, and Pikeville. Additionally, PY 1999 WIA Incentive Funds enabled the purchase and installation, at the end of FFY 2003 of adaptive equipment in One-Stops statewide. AT staff maintain the upkeep of the current systems equipment. This assisted One-Stop consumers in both FFY 2004 and 2005, especially those with visual or other disabilities seeking self-service capacity, to take full advantage of the benefits offered by the One-Stop system.

Finally, Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRS) 186.640 established the Kentucky Bioptic Driving Program. This program enables visually impaired individuals to utilize bioptics in the operation of a motor vehicle in Kentucky. In FFY 2004, 19 WIA certified consumers enrolled in the program with 13 enrolling in FFY 2005.

The Kentucky Office for the Blind had 20 tickets assigned in FFY 2004 and 22 tickets assigned in FFY 2005. In October all Vocational Rehabilitation counselors and assistants attended training, which included the 1998 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Ticket to Work and Work incentives Improvement Act of 1999 and Social Security Changes. This program was developed and conducted in collaboration with Department of Vocational Rehabilitation staff. There will be a continued emphasize on Ticket to Work and the provision of training to staff for Ticket to Work and Benefits Planning.

### **Maximize funding and resources for department programs and staff**

The Office for the Blind secured a continuation of WIA funding for the FFY 2006 and 2007 for the Bioptic Driving Program.

In maintaining a priority of funding for the counselors budgets an additional ten thousand (\$10,000) dollars was added to each counselors budget totaling \$170,000 for the FFY 2005. This allowed the OFB to serve more consumers in achieving positive employment outcomes.

KATS funding is being continued by RSA. The Kentucky allocation has been increased slightly through FFY 2007.

OFB staff met with the Director of Veterans Benefits along with the Vocational Rehabilitation Veterans Counselor to discuss a potential partnership in the provision of services to veterans. The Director of VA services attended a counselors staff meeting and presented on the VA program and its requirements. The Independent Living Veterans Specialist located at the Lexington VA Services offices serves on the SRC.

**Develop, examine and implement new and improved methods and programs for Client Services.**

**An online E-manual of departmental procedures was completed in FFY 2005. Professional marketing materials regarding independent living were purchased for OFB from the Lighthouse for the Blind. In addition, simulator vision cards were purchased to use as training materials for support groups in Senior Citizen Centers and Nursing homes.**

Counselors are in touch with small business development institutes across the state. Internally, one staff did a leadership project on self-employment. Upon completion of the project training on the project and its findings occurred for OFB staff.

Initially, three pilots were established for the Deaf Blind Dual case project and services are now provided statewide. All OFB, VR and IL counselors received training specific to Deaf Blind services.

OFB has expanded and provides regionalized services through the Bioptic Driving program increasing the number of licensed drivers. To date there is only one certified driver program available for contract located in Nashville, Tennessee. This serves as an available resource to the South Central Kentucky area.

Consumer satisfaction surveys conducted at closure are broken out by region and counselor caseload. The summarized result gives information specific to each counselor. The results of the surveys are utilized in the staff performance evaluations for the purposes of continuous improvement and the identification of training needs.

The Accessible Textbook Unit Program completed a follow up survey. This survey was utilized by the University Disability Units in determining service gaps and trends. Staff work closely with publishers and are able to obtain needed materials for individuals. The OFB is designated as the temporary holder of this on-line "Repository" until a National

The OFB along with OVR is working collaboratively with other state staff in the development and implementation of an effective comprehensive responsive management information system.

Counselors have provided informational programs to churches for outreach to minority population with a goal of capturing the needs of the blind and visually impaired throughout the state for needed services. OFB staff participates in statewide support and advocacy groups. These collaborative relationships provide increased resources and networking opportunities for OFB staff and consumers.

**Enhance consumer and State Rehabilitation council involvement, input and satisfaction.**

The Office for the Blind works with the SRC and makes every effort to seek input for needed improvements and recommendations. This occurs through formal informal communication as well as the committee work of the SRC members. Working in partnership with the SRC the OFB met all its goals for FY 2005 in ensuring that individuals served received the needed services and supports to gain independence through employment and increased skills acquisition. The State Rehabilitation Council and the following sub-committees guide OFB operations: Bylaws, Business Opportunities, Legislative, Nominating, Public Relations and Special Projects. Summaries of the committees' activities are included in Attachment 4.2 (c).

The statewide satisfaction survey was conducted, compiled, summarized and prepared by the University of Kentucky Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling. The report was submitted to the OFB in January of 2006 by Ralph M. Crystal, Ph.D., C.R.C., Director, Graduate Program in rehabilitation Counseling. The purpose of the study was to assess consumer satisfaction with services provided by the Kentucky Office for the Blind. OFB developed the survey instrument for the Blind in conjunction with the State Rehabilitation Council and the Rehabilitation counseling program as a means of meeting the program evaluation requirements of the 1992 Amendments of the Rehabilitation Act. A total of 521 consumers whose cases had been closed in fiscal year 2005 were referred for participation and of this number 157 (30.1%) were respondents. Survey results were examined at state, regional, and caseload levels. The following four satisfaction performance indicators were examined in the study: 1) Consumer satisfaction with their level of participation in decision-making, 2) Consumer satisfaction with their interaction with vocational rehabilitation staff (OFB staff), 3) Consumer satisfaction with services and service providers; and 4) Consumer satisfaction with their employment outcomes.

*Among the survey respondents, 71 (42.2%) were male and 86 (54.8%) were female. The education levels of the respondents varied from below the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, 38 (24.2%), high school education or GED, 80 (51%); college graduate, 28 (17.8%); and graduate school, 11 (7.0%). Seventy-one (45.2%) of these respondents were married, 27 (17.2%) were divorced, 8 (5.1%) were widowed, and 51 (32.5%) were single. The age breakdown of survey participants was as follows: Ages 16-19: 5 (3.2%); ages 20-29: 22 (14%); ages 30-39: 25 (15.9%); ages 40-49: 33 (21%); ages 50-59: 36 (22.9%); ages 60 – 69: 28 (17.8%), and ages 70-79: 6 (3.8%). Two participants did not report their age.*

Overall, the results of the study indicate that consumers expressed high degrees of satisfaction with their experiences with staff, as well as with specific services received and outcomes achieved. For example, overall, 91.5% of consumers indicated that OFB services were excellent (72.7%) or good (18.8%) and 86.5% of consumers felt the quality of OFB services were appropriate and met their needs. Additionally, 10.3% of consumers indicated that OFB services were somewhat helpful and 3.2% indicated that services were not helpful. Additionally, consumer comments on an open-ended response questions were overwhelmingly positive. 69.5% rated the ability, knowledge, and vocational counseling skill of the counselors as Excellent. 66.7% rated the helpfulness OFB office staff as excellent. 77.3% stated that decisions were made jointly between them and their counselor and when asked about level of satisfaction with involvement in the decision making process 75% were very satisfied.

### **Improve and increase effectiveness of Kentucky Business Enterprises**

The Director of KBE completed the Certified Public Manager Program through the Governmental Services Center at Kentucky State University during the 2005 fiscal year. One vending Repair Specialist attended the National Automatic Merchandisers Association (NAMA) meeting and all KBE staff participated in DFB training programs throughout FFY 2005.

There were three (3) new vendors in 2004 and two (2) in 2005 trained and licensed. The five-year follow-up contract with Fort Knox was completed in August of 2004. Complete installation and the opening of the McCreary County Federal Prison vending site was completed in 2004. KBE became the vendor for the new Kentucky Transportation Center opening in 2004. In 2005, KBE negotiated and secured a new soft drink agreement and contract with Pepsi. Two new contract Rest Areas in Hart County occurred in 2005 as well as the finalization of the Cincinnati Bell interstate telephone contract. A vending site was opened at the Gateway Technical College adding to the Northern Kentucky route in 2005 KBE will bid on contract rights at Fort Campbell in 2006 and a survey of food service contracts with the Kentucky Job Corps Centers is in progress.

### **Streamline and enhance Department for the Blind Functions including strengthening the Human Resource Development Program**

In 2005 in order for the Kentucky Office for the Blind to raise the level of competitiveness with other states a restructuring of the classification system occurred. New performance objectives were completed and an upgrade of positions allowing for an increase in salaries for existing staff and higher entry-level wages for new hires based on their education, certification and experience levels.

OFB offers financial incentives to encourage staff retention and promote the achievement of CSPD requirements or become a CRC. The office offers educational tuition assistance, payment of initial certification and maintenance fees, study time allowance per week for staff enrolled in school, alternate hours access to distance learning through state buildings, technology upgrades across the state to allow access to distance learning and training opportunities for maintaining certification requirements through training seminars and professional development conferences.

The OFB had one (1) individual complete their Masters in Orientation and Mobility through U of L this year and ten (10) individuals completed their Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling through the University of Kentucky. Currently the OFB has 16.5 rehabilitation counselors (one vacancy that OFB is seeking to fill). Forty-eight (48%) percent of OFB's existing counselors (8) hold their Master Rehabilitation Counseling and their CRC certification meeting the state CSPD requirement. Of the remaining 8 full-time and one part-time (16.5 with one vacancy) counselors, three (3) are enrolled in the University of Kentucky's Rehabilitation distance learning or accelerated graduate program and two (2) of the three (3) have completed 75% of the coursework, five full time and one part time (5.5) counselors are now eligible for certification and are preparing for the test, one (1) newly hired has committed to enroll in the MRC program. One (1) counselor is planning to retire within the next five (5) year and is not interested in returning to a formal educational setting.

An internal Leadership Development program was developed in an effort to prepare individuals in the Department for leadership positions and provide succession planning. Phase I of the program in January of 2005. Participants will be required under this program to complete a three-week program that will be a collaborative venture with the Georgia State University's Regional Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program. All participants were assigned a project and a mentor from the Department's Steering Committee. Two agency administrators completed management and leadership training programs through Georgia State University.

The OFB will have a continued focus on succession planning and work with Georgia State Region IV RRCEP on the development of strategies for succession management planning. Kentucky's retirement incentive plan for employees in the Kentucky Employee Retirement system that retire before January 2009 will have a major impact on the state workforce. The Kentucky Personnel Cabinet had done a preliminary study and estimates 35% of the state workforce will retire within this 'window'. This implicates the importance of succession planning in an effort to capture the many years of expertise and experience of veteran staff in the OFB.

## Supported Employment

In 2005, the Kentucky Office for the Blind had 25 active supported employment cases. Four of the twenty-five were closed with a positive employment outcome. Two individuals of the twenty-five were closed after moving out of state and leaving no forwarding address. In the State of Kentucky there are seventy-nine (79) community rehabilitation providers (inclusive of satellite operations). The Office for the Blind uses the same fee schedule as the General State Agency for providers.

A crucial element identified through the needs assessment is that providers are limited in their skills and expertise in providing employment services to the blind and visually impaired. Provider's predominately receive "extended services" through mental health and mental retardation funding sources with additional dollars funded by the state legislation for this target population. The acceptance criteria states an individual must have an IQ of 70 or less or a mental illness diagnosis. In the State of Kentucky "extended services" provided through the community rehabilitation providers follow strict requirements and the population served through the Office for the Blind typically do not meet the set criteria making funding for extended services is problematic for OFB consumers.

OFB offers "blindness expertise" services, such as Orientation and Mobility, Assistive Technology Assessments, equipment and replacement of that equipment during the extended services period. OFB continues to work with SE providers to increase services to the Blind and Visually Impaired. Training is provided to all staff covering "extended support services" and how the OFB as an agency assist CRP's with the provision of on-going services pertaining to blindness.

OFB staff attended the Kentucky Association for Persons In Supported Employment State Conference. OFB has a voting staff representative on the Developmental Disabilities Council and that individual serves on the Public Policy Committee of the Council. This allows the OFB to stay abreast of Supported Employment issues across the state and work collaboratively with other agency and advocacy groups in resolving those issues.

VR counselors met with supportive employment providers across the state to advocate acceptance of OFB consumers into their supported employment programs. The Office for the Blind offers training assistance to Community Rehabilitation Providers on unique blindness skills inclusive of the provision of Assistive Technology, Independent Living and Orientation & Mobility services to assure positive employment outcomes for individuals in Supported Employment.

The OFB has statewide agreements and receives technical assistance from the designated Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Supported Employment Coordinator. The OFB works closely with OVR in working with community rehabilitation providers in the

utilization of services in establishing collaborative working agreements and fee schedules.

In 2005, The Office for the Blind developed for use statewide a Student Transition Guide for Junior and Senior High School students and their parents that outlining services surrounding transition. The Office for the Blind works closely with staff from the Kentucky School for the Blind and Educational Cooperatives across the state in planning transition services and IPE development for students that require supported employment services. Initial development of a mentoring support group for students 7 through 12 grades with a visual impairment is in the early stages in the Jefferson County Public Schools. Efforts are being made to bring the eleven Special Ed Cooperative Staff and VR counselors together for education and training to strengthen the process. OFB staff attended the Kentucky Association on Higher Education and Disability Conference in 2005. A unique program titled "INSIGHT" is in the planning and development stage in 2005 for implementation in 2006. This is a partnership with the Big East Educational Cooperative, Kentucky School for the Blind and Morehead State University that place students with visual impairments in an environment where they can experience college life.

OFB collaborates with other agencies such as Interagency Transition Council, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, The Department of Education, and the Kentucky School for the Blind work collaboratively in an effort to support legislation for additional state funding for supported employment programs. One OFB staff member serves on the Medicaid Infrastructure State Grant Steering Committee. This allows the OFB to be involved in the decision-making process and keep abreast of work issues relating to Medicaid and Supported Employment. Office for the Blind Staff attended the 2005 CRP RCEP IV State Planning Council Meeting that is inclusive of all Community Rehabilitation Providers throughout the state. At this meeting the group reviewed State priorities for community rehabilitation services and setting goals to increase employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

The OFB developed and funded a Deaf Blind Coordinator position. This program is a collaborative project with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. Training skills were provided to enhance the services for persons with a significant disability for this underserved population receiving supported employment services. OFB places an emphasis on working directly with the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in securing the necessary supports in achieving successful employment outcomes for this underserved population.

The OFB recognizes the need for expansion in the area of Supported Employment and increasing the number and skill level of Community Rehabilitation Programs serving individuals who are Blind and Visually Impaired. This will be a continued focus of the OFB in 2007.

## Reporting Requirements/Standards And Indicators

### Number of Applicants Determined Eligible Receiving Services

During FY 2005, there were 1,794 active cases in the vocational rehabilitation program. There were 416 individuals who had employment outcomes all of whom (100%) were significantly disabled. Of those individuals who achieved employment outcomes as a result of vocational rehabilitation services, 352 have incomes above minimum wage.

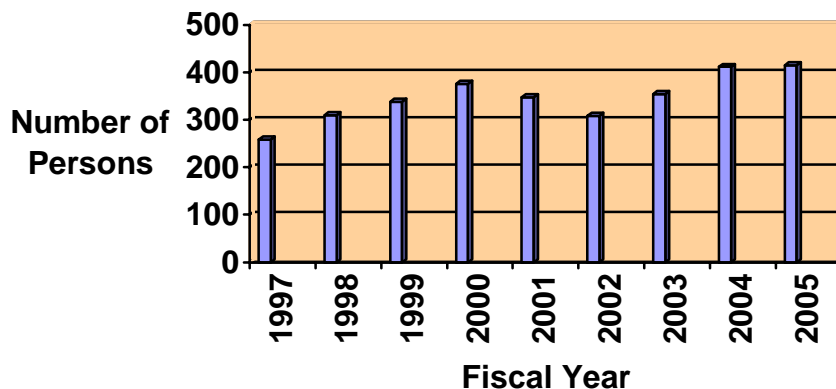
### **1998 REHABILITATION ACT STANDARDS AND INDICATORS**

OFB is committed to providing the highest quality services to persons with blindness or visual impairments and to the development of and adherence to a full system of accountability. The office recognizes the following standards of excellence that include evaluation standards and performance indicators. These Vocational Rehabilitation standards comply with all requirements of the Workforce Investment Act, The Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 as well as the goals listed under the strategic plan for the U.S. Department of Education.

#### **Evaluation Standard One: Employment Outcomes**

**Performance Indicator 1.1:** The number of employment outcomes;  
The number of employment outcomes for 2004 was 412. The number of employment outcomes for FY 2005 was 416 exceeding the prior year by 4. The following chart depicts the last eight years of employment outcomes for the Office. ***RSA Standard: equal or exceed previous year***

### **Successful Placements**





**Performance Indicator 1.2:** The percentage of cases with employment outcomes; *RSA Standard: 68.9%*

The percentage of cases with employment outcomes for FY 2005 of the total number of cases was **79.85%**.

**Primary Indicator One (Performance Indicator 1.3):** Percentage of all individuals determined to have achieved an employment outcome who exited the OFB program into competitive, self, or KBE employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage. *RSA Standard: 35.4%*

For FY 2005 the percentage was **84.62%**

**Primary Indicator Two (Performance Indicator 1.4):** Percentage of individuals with significant disabilities as a percentage of all individuals who exit the VR program into competitive, self, or KBE employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage. *RSA Standard: 89%*

For FY 2005 the percentage was **100%**

**Primary Indicator Three (Performance Indicator 1.5):** The average hourly earnings of all individuals who exit the OFB program in competitive, self, or KBE employment with earning levels equivalent to at least the minimum wage as a ratio to Kentucky's average hourly earnings for all individuals in the state who are employed. *RSA Standard: .59*

For FY 2005 the ratio to the average Kentucky hourly wage for all categories was **63.60%**.

**Performance Indicator 1.6:** Self-sufficiency resulting from employment;  
RSA Standard: 30.4 mathematical difference

Those reporting "own income as a major source of support @ application" were 66.19% for FY 2005; the percentage change between application and closure was **29.97%**. The OFB fell just below the target by .43% for this indicator. The OFB will address with all VR and KBE field staff through training this application assuring that consumers participating in services receive opportunities to increase their source of income achieving self-sufficiency through employment. Consumers are referred for benefits planning to assure their understanding of the impact of working on their benefits addressing their fears for this area so it does not negatively impact their decision. Upward career movement, skills acquisition and wage increases will be a focus for staff in working with consumers in assuring that the OFB meets this performance indicator.

## **Evaluation Standard Two: Minority Access**

**Performance Indicator 2.1:** Service rates for all individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio to the service rate for all non-minority individuals with disabilities for FY 2005 was **92.65%**. *RSA Standard: .80 ratio*

## **INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES**

During FFY 2005 a total of \$8,321.00 plus staff expenses in Title I Funds were allotted and spent for innovation and expansion activities. The following is a summary of how these funds were expended:

**Work Experience Program** - A work experience program was implemented at the Charles McDowell Rehabilitation Center in Louisville during FY 1998. The program gives consumers an opportunity to build or enhance strong work ethics and self-esteem, develop and enhance communication skills, work in an integrated, competitive work setting, develop a work history and earn money while gaining work experience. Work experience opportunities are provided in the medical and veterinary community, clerical and office settings, factory environments, hospitality and service settings, retail food establishments, education field and maintenance. During FY 2005, 31 consumers were placed in successful work experience settings.

During FY 2006, the State Rehabilitation Council had a budget of \$45,400.00. These dollars came from Title I funds. The projected budget for FY 2007 is \$48,500.00

OFB does not use any basic support dollars to support the Statewide Independent Living Council. The only funds that they receive are from the Independent Living Part B funds, which are approximately \$18,700.

Pursuant to section 106 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, the office will assess its performance on these standards and indicators and the state performance measures established under section 136 (b) of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to the extent the measures are applicable to individuals with disabilities. The Office for the Blind will report these results on an annual basis.